



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Equal Employment Opportunity

Fiscal Year 2015

Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report

Management Directive - 715

Report created by:
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Office of the Director, Civil Rights Division
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Director, Civil Rights Division.....	3
Parts A.-D. <i>Agency Identification and General Employment Totals</i>	4
Part E. <i>Executive Summary</i>	6
Part F. <i>Certification of Establishment of Continuing EEO Programs</i>	37
Part G. <i>Agency Self-Assessment Checklist Measuring Essential Elements</i>	38
Part H. <i>EEO Plan For Attaining the Essential Elements of A Model EEO Program</i>	49
Part I. <i>EEO Plan to Eliminate Identified</i>	51
Part J. <i>Special Program Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring and Advancement of Individuals With Targeted Disabilities</i>	64

APPENDICES

- A. Acronyms
- B. Definitions
- C. Reasonable Accommodation Report
- D. Summary of FY 2015 SEP Program Activities
- E. Policy Statements
- F. Organizational Chart
- G. FY 2015 EEOC 462 Report
- H. MD 715 Data Tables

A Message from the Director, Civil Rights Division

On behalf of the Chief, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS), I am pleased to present the agency's FY 2015 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program Status Report, as required by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Management Directive (MD) 715.

The Chief, NRCS is fully committed to maintaining a work environment free of discrimination and ensuring a compliant EEO program that practices the principles of equal employment opportunities for all employees and applicants. By practicing the core values of Respect, Fairness, and Diversity, NRCS recognizes the benefits of diversity and inclusion and strives to promote fairness by treating each other with respect and providing greater opportunities for individuals to reach their full potential. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, it is critically important that the rich experiences, backgrounds, and skills of our diverse workforce is fully embraced to help us meet the diverse needs of our employees and customers in order to achieve the agency's mission of "*Helping People Help the Land*."

NRCS succeeds in part by ensuring the shared vision of a model EEO program is communicated to the workforce at all levels. By ensuring the affirmative employment framework remains practical, we work to ensure that our workplace decisions are equitable and based upon merit, and by employing a workforce that reflects one of our nation's greatest strengths—the diversity of America's citizens. NRCS recognizes the need to create and maintain a highly skilled workforce in which individual differences are recognized and valued. Our employees are empowered to do their work so that they can reach their potential while making contributions toward the NRCS's mission. The plentiful support to the operations of the Civil Rights Division demonstrates our top leadership commitment, our teamwork and our duty to remain compliant on matters related to equal employment opportunity and civil rights.

As the agency's principal EEO senior advisor on all matters as related to EEO and civil rights, I thank our senior leaders, including the Assistant Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs, Regional Conservationists, State Conservationists, finance, budget, procurement, and personnel staff for their collaboration, feedback, and technical support to ensure an effective implementation and management of the MD 715 initiatives. I also want to take this opportunity to encourage the NRCS workforce to renew your commitment to support the principles of EEO. A diverse, highly skilled workforce is simply vital to our mission, as it is the rich diversity of the NRCS workforce that is the fabric of the agency's past, present, and future success – and directly impacts the successful delivery of technical assistance and services we provide. Together we can make a difference.

Selina Lee

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART A - D		U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission FEDERAL AGENCY ANNUAL EEO PROGRAM STATUS REPORT	
For period covering October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015.			
PART A Department or Agency Identifying Information	1. Agency		1. U.S. Department of Agriculture
	1.a. 2 nd level reporting component		Natural Resources Conservation Service
	1.b. 3 rd level reporting component		
	1.c. 4 th level reporting component		
	2. Address		2. 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
	3. City, State, Zip Code		3. Washington, DC 20020
	4. CPDF Code	4. DA	5. Agency Code
PART B Total Employment	1. Enter total number of permanent full-time and part-time employees		1. 10,395
	2. Enter total number of temporary employees		2. 201
	3. Enter total number employees paid from non-appropriated funds		3. 0
	4. TOTAL EMPLOYMENT [add lines B 1 through 3]		4. 10,596
PART C Agency Official(s) Responsible For Oversight of EEO Program(s)	1. Head of Agency Official Title		Jason Weller Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service
	2. Agency Head Designee		Leonard Jordan Assistant Chief for Conservation
	3. Principal EEO Director/Official Title/series/grade		Selina S. Lee Director, Civil Rights Division (CRD), GS-260-15
	4. Title VII Affirmative EEO Program Official		Samora Bennerman-Johnson Branch Chief, Program Evaluation and Compliance Branch, CRD
	5. Section 501 Affirmative Action Program Official		Brianne Burger, Disability Employment Program Manager, Talent Management Division
	6. Complaint Processing Program Manager		Sandra McWhirter, Branch Chief Employment and Resolution Compliance Branch, CRD
	7. Other Responsible EEO Staff		Sudha Sriparameswaran, Acting Director, Talent Management
			Sharyn Alvarez, National Federal Women's Program Manager
			Daruss Golden, Equal Opportunity Specialist, CRD (for MD-715 reporting)

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART A - D		U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission FEDERAL AGENCY ANNUAL EEO PROGRAM STATUS REPORT	
PART D List of Subordinate Components Covered in This Report	Subordinate Component and Location (City/State)	CPDF and FIPS codes	
Policy Statements			X
Executive Summary [FORM 715-01 PART E], that includes:	X	*Optional Annual Self-Assessment Checklist Against Essential Elements [FORM 715-01PART G]	X
Brief paragraph describing the agency's mission and mission-related functions	X	*EEO Plan To Attain the Essential Elements of a Model EEO Program [FORM 715-01 PART H] for each programmatic essential element requiring improvement	X
Summary of results of agency's annual self-assessment against MD-715 "Essential Elements"	X	*EEO Plan To Eliminate Identified Barrier [FORM 715-01 PART I] for each identified barrier	X
Summary of Analysis of Work Force Profiles including net change analysis and comparison to RCLF	X	*Special Program Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, and Advancement of Individuals With Targeted Disabilities for agencies with 1,000 or more employees [FORM 715-01 PART J]	X
Summary of EEO Plan objectives planned to eliminate identified barriers or correct program deficiencies	X	*Copy of Workforce Data Tables as necessary to support Executive Summary and/or EEO Plans	X
Summary of EEO Plan action items implemented or accomplished	X	*Copy of data from 462 Report as necessary to support action items related to Complaint Processing Program deficiencies, ADR effectiveness, or other compliance issues	X
*Statement of Establishment of Continuing Equal Employment Opportunity Programs [FORM 715-01 PART F]	X	*Copy of Facility Accessibility Survey results as necessary to support EEO Action Plan for building renovation projects	
*Copies of relevant EEO Policy Statement(s) and/or excerpts from revisions made to EEO Policy Statements	X	*Organizational Chart	X

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)
ANNUAL EEO PROGRAM STATUS REPORT
EEOC FORM 715-01, PART E
Executive Summary**

Introduction

The mission of the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is to improve the health of our Nation's natural resources while sustaining and enhancing the productivity of American agriculture. NRCS provides voluntary assistance through strong partnerships with private landowners, managers and communities to protect, restore, and enhance the lands and waters upon which people and the environment depend.

NRCS strives to ensure that its workforce is free of barriers to equal employment opportunity (EEO) to attract, develop, and retain a high quality workforce as is specified in its Strategic Plan for FY 2011-2015, Objective No. 3.4.

NRCS employs a total of 10,395 employees throughout its headquarters in Washington, D.C., and four regional offices that include 50 States, the Virgin Islands and the Pacific Basin. NRCS employees primarily provide conservation-related program administration and field services across the nation (see Appendix F). The workforce is committed to providing our partners and participants the assistance to succeed in a highly competitive global agricultural economy.

Pursuant to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC), Management Directive (MD) 715 guidance, all Federal managers, supervisors, human resource specialists and EEO officials are held accountable for the effective implementation of a "model EEO program." The lead responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of the EEO program within the Agency rests with the Director of the Civil Rights Division (CRD), who reports to the Chief of NRCS.

The office of the CRD is located in Beltsville, Maryland, and is responsible for the overall evaluation and development of the agency-wide affirmative employment effort with direct authority to administer the EEO process including such functions as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and workforce training.

The goal of this Report is to assess the progress of the NRCS EEO program in accordance with the EEOC requirements and to provide feedback to assist USDA in its ongoing efforts to become a model EEO employer.

Key Accomplishments in FY 2015

1. On January 26, 2015, issued a new NRCS Anti-Discrimination Policy Statement in support of the Secretary's policy of ensuring a work environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and retaliation.
2. Routinely engaged interested employee groups to help implement agency-wide diversity and Civil Rights initiatives, such as participating in college job fairs; conducting cultural awareness training; planning annual ethnic observance programs; promoting targeted recruitment; addressing career development; and engaging the workforce in the SEP barrier analyses.
3. Ensured that 90-100% of the performance plans for supervisors and employees contain CR goals and objectives. Evaluated supervisors and managers to ensure compliance and their committed support for

CR/EEO. NRCS incorporated the requirements of DR 4300-010, "*Civil Rights Accountability Policy and Procedures*," which requires that annual performance appraisals for managers and supervisors include an evaluation of their contributions to USDA's commitment to CR and equal opportunity (EO), and to adherence to its CR policy.

4. Conducted effective Civil Rights Impact Analyses (CRIA) and timely submitted 90-100% of completed CRIAs with all required documentation.
5. Effectively planned and conducted regular and systematic EEO and CR compliance reviews (CRCR) of federally assisted and conducted programs in accordance with Departmental guidance. As of this date, 100% of scheduled EEO and CRCRs have been completed.
6. Ensured all notification requirements were posted on the appropriate documents and publications, including the Internet, and complied with Sections 504 and 508 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* and DR 4330-005, "*Prohibition against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in Programs and Activities conducted by USDA.*"
7. Proactively managed the Agency's EEO program by conducting program evaluation; promoting strategic outreach outcomes; and engaging stakeholders in addressing recruitment, advancement and retention initiatives to help remove barriers for groups with low participation.
8. Achieved a mild increase in participation rates for the following groups in the permanent workforce since FY 2014: White female (+0.63%); Minorities (+0.02%); Persons with Disabilities (+0.07%); and Persons with Targeted Disabilities (+0.06%).
9. Cooperated with the EEO investigators' requests for documentation, and responded 100% timely to requests for information and assistance.
10. Created diversity in the development of the Five-Year Human Capital Strategic Plan and Workforce and Succession Plan. Completed 80% of the NRCS Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Action Plan.
11. Promoted Special Emphasis Program (SEP) goals and objectives by appointing eight National Special Emphasis Program Managers (NSEPMs); i.e., American Indian/Alaska Native Program; Asian American/Pacific Islander Program; Black Employment Program; Disability Employment Program; Federal Women's Program (FWP); Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Program; Hispanic Employment Program (HEP); and Veterans Employment Program. The national FWP and HEP managers are full-time managers and the other five national program managers are collateral duty appointments. Additionally, NRCS has over 400 collateral duty SEP Managers (SEPM) nationally in each State and Center for each of the eight SEPs listed above.
12. Successfully conducted ongoing analysis to address potential barriers to hiring and retention of women, minorities and persons with disabilities. The barrier analyses were conducted by National SEPMs who reported to the Director of the Talent Management Division. Each NSEPM also engaged the State's SEPM to implement the plan of action in eliminating potential barriers that may affect each SEP group.
13. Demonstrated excellent results in maintaining high participation rate of persons with reportable disabilities, which comprised 10.18% of the permanent workforce, which was higher than the USDA community benchmark of 10.00%.
14. Continued the collaborative relationships with the Early Resolution and Conciliation Division, OASCR, to provide ADR training to the workforce. Ensured that ADR information and training such as facilitation, teambuilding, conflict resolution, coaching and mentoring are made available to managers and employees.
15. Launched the agency-wide Limited English Proficiency (LEP) program to provide equal opportunity in all programs, services and activities to LEP individuals.
16. NRCS achieved the following excellent results regarding the processing of employment complaints (Title VII):
 - NRCS ensured all EEO counselors received annual required training.

- The ration of pre-complaints filing decreased from 0.5% in FY 2014 to 0.3% in FY 2015, which is lower than the government-wide average of 1.1%.
- The offer rate of ADR at the pre-complaint stage of the EEO complaint process was 98.0% which was higher than the government average of 85.7%.
- The ADR election rate at the pre-complaint stage increased from 28.2% in FY 2010 to 70.0% in FY 2015, which was higher than the government average of 51.1%.
- Approximately 81% of the NRCS EEO investigations were completed timely by the OASCR, which was a positive improvement from 60% in FY 2014.
- In support of the OASCR partnership initiatives, NRCS set aside approximately \$420,000 (including indirect costs) for conducting an estimate of 38 EEO investigations.
- There were no instances of untimely responses to EEOC orders or settlements. All EEOC and OASCR requests for information or documents were met in timely manner. No remands or notices for failure to comply with EEOC's orders were issued.

Action/Plan	Y/N	Comments
CRD Reports to the Agency Head	Y	
Succession Plan	Y	
Barrier Analysis Conducted	Y	Final report will be completed by the end of FY 2016.
Applicant Flow Data Collected	N	Working in Progress
Targeted Disability Goal Met	N	Working the Action Plan to Hire PWTB

Summary Results of Self-Assessment Against MD 715 Essential Elements:

Essential Element A: Demonstrated Commitment from Agency Leadership

The assessment of this element includes a review of whether the Agency Head communicates a commitment to EEO through the employee ranks at the beginning of the Agency Head's tenure and annually thereafter, by issuing and disseminating written policy statements that express the Agency Head's commitment to EEO and a workplace free of discriminatory harassment.

In an effort to move forward and transform the agency into a model EEO program, NRCS continues to hold directors, high-level employees, EEO staff officials and personnel officers accountable for the effective management of NRCS' affirmative employment programs. NRCS reaffirms EEO for all employees and applicants for employment regardless of any protected bases, and strives to ensure all employees are able to compete on a fair and level playing field for job opportunities and advancement.

NRCS has successfully accomplished the below listed goals as is necessary to achieve a model EEO program based on the evaluation from the USDA, OASCR in its FY 2015 Civil Rights Performance Plan and Accomplishment Report:

- 1) *Commitment of Agency Leadership/Strategic Plan Integration;*
- 2) *Program Delivery: Proactive management and legal compliance;*
- 3) *EEO program: Proactive management and legal compliance; and*
- 4) *Utilization of Alternative Dispute Resolution*
- 5) *Procurement.*
- 6) *Secretary's Commitment*
- 7) *Implementation of the Secretary's Commitment to Diversity*
- 8) *Establishment and Implementation of a Special Emphasis Program to Expand Diversity.*

As such, NRCS accomplished the following key practices:

1. Ensured that CR/EEO policies were prominently posted in all personnel offices, employee bulletin boards, and on the Agency's website. All policies and procedures related to anti-discrimination laws, CR, the EEO complaints process, reasonable accommodations, and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) were posted or disseminated via NRCS' public website.
2. Provided ADR training to managers, supervisors and employees. Further, the State Offices provided instructor-led CR training during the all-employees meetings to inform the employees of their rights and responsibilities. Approximately 100% of the Agency's employees completed the USDA mandatory *NO FEAR Act* online training.
3. Conducted and completed 100% of CR compliance reviews in the State and Field offices as scheduled wherein compliance was evaluated and noted regarding those areas which needed improvement and compliance.
4. Evaluated managers and supervisors for their contributions to USDA's commitment to CR and EEO through the submission of the Agency's FY 2015 Performance Plan to OASCR. Further, annual performance appraisals for all SES-level supervisors and managers were reviewed to obtain feedback on how managers and supervisors carried out their support and commitment to CR and EEO.

5. Issued an accountability statement informing managers and supervisors regarding the requirements set out in the Departmental accountability regulation, DR 4300-010, "*Civil Rights Accountability Policy and Procedures*" (Appendix E).
6. Issued a new Anti-Discrimination Policy Statement from the NRCS Agency Head to reinforce the commitment to provide a work environment that is free from unlawful discrimination, and to emphasize the obligations of managers and supervisors to prevent discrimination and promptly cease any form of harassment or retaliation in the workplace (Appendix E).
7. Allocated approximately \$2.8 million in staffing and budgeting resources to support the operations of the Agency's CR program.

Overall, the Agency achieved all requirements under this essential element with no deficiencies found.

Essential Element B: Integration of EEO into the Agency's Strategic Mission

This element recognizes that equality of opportunity is essential in attracting, developing, and retaining the most qualified workforce to support the agency's achievement of its strategic mission. It emphasizes that the role of the EEO office is to serve as a resource to agency managers and supervisors by providing direction, guidance and monitoring of key activities to achieve a diverse workplace free of barriers to EEO.

The assessment of this essential element included a review of the reporting structure of the EEO Director; techniques the Agency uses to integrate the EEO program into the Agency's mission; whether the EEO Director has regular and effective means of informing the Agency Head and other senior management officials of the status of the EEO program; and whether EEO officials are involved and consulted on human capital management and personnel actions.

The lead responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of the EEO program within the Agency rests with the Director of the Civil Rights Division (CRD), who reports to the NRCS Administrator. The Director, CRD is responsible for the overall evaluation and development of the Agency-wide affirmative employment effort with direct authority to administer the EEO program at the sub-agency level of USDA. The Director, CRD routinely works with the Deputy Chief for Management, the Director of Talent Management Division, the Director of Human Resources, and the OASCR to monitor the progress in implementing the affirmative employment strategic goals and actions; and attends the senior staff meetings bi-weekly or as needed. Other EEO officials are often requested to provide consultation on issues related to EEO requirements and other personnel related matters.

Annually, the Chief, NRCS allocates sufficient resources to administer the Title VII and Rehabilitation Act programs. Amidst Agency reorganization, the Agency produced an accompanying Strategic Plan Progress Report and Update Plan. The release of the updated FY 2011-2015 Strategic Plan was postponed due to delayed funding and Congressional modification of the NRCS program budget. Despite the delay, the Strategic Plan Progress Report and Update incorporated the agency's assurance of fair and equitable service delivery to all program customers and the goals of increasing diversity in employment. It also included assurance of CR/EEO goals and objectives relative to the Secretary's new Civil Rights Era and Cultural Transformation initiatives.

As a companion document to NRCS' Strategic Plan, the Human Capital Plan emphasizes outreach, workforce diversity, upward mobility, and staff development and outlines a variety of strategies designed to ensure that the Agency can continue to serve the public, build and maintain partnerships, and provide healthy and productive natural resources through a highly skilled and diverse workforce. NRCS' Human Capital Vision of "Conservation First, People Always," is driven by a business and human capital driver paradigm which focuses on five key human capital strategic goals:

- Leadership
- Recruitment and Retention
- Performance Culture
- Talent Development; and
- Human Capital Effectiveness

The Agency's Human Capital Plan seeks to develop a leadership cadre that represents the diverse communities and customers we serve. The assessments of current and future needs are being accomplished through a series of leadership competency models which are accessible to all employees.

NRCS' website successfully distributes information concerning EEO laws, regulations, plans, and reports. The CRD website contains the program strategic plan, MD 715 reports, EEO and ADR notices and policy statements. CRD publishes program updates and reviews which are best workplace practices; and keeps the workforce informed of the latest EEO/Civil Rights updates and activities.

There were no deficiencies found in this essential element.

Essential Element C: Management and Program Accountability

This element recognizes that a model Title VII EEO and Rehabilitation Act program will hold managers, supervisors, EEO officials, and personnel officers accountable for the effective implementation and management of the Agency's program. As a part of management and program accountability, the MD 715 provides that agencies should ensure that: (1) regular internal audits are conducted of the EEO program; (2) EEO procedures are established; (3) managers and supervisors are evaluated on EEO; (4) personnel policies are clear and consistently implemented; (5) a comprehensive anti-harassment policy has been issued; (6) an effective reasonable accommodation policy has been issued; and (7) findings of discrimination are reviewed.

In accordance with the foregoing, NRCS ensured that all EEO policies and procedures are updated and distributed annually throughout the workforce. It is noted that while preparing and developing the annual MD 715 report, NRCS conducted a self-assessment to evaluate the Agency's effort in achieving the MD 715 program goals and objectives.

The Agency also incorporated the requirements of DR 4300-010, "*Civil Rights Accountability Policy and Procedures*," which requires that annual performance appraisals for managers and supervisors include an evaluation of their contributions to USDA's commitment to CR and equal opportunity, and the adherence to its CR policy.

All NRCS managers, supervisors and employees have a stand-alone CR/EEO critical performance element. The element incorporates the Agency's CR policies and provides the accountability necessary to ensure that all customers and employees are fairly and equitably treated. The performance standards for new employees are put in place within 30 days of beginning their tour of duty.

Overall the Agency achieved its ongoing effort to ensure that both the Departmental and EEOC guidance are followed. There were no deficiencies found in this essential element.

Essential Element D: Proactive Prevention of Unlawful Discrimination

This element requires that the agency conduct self-assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the Title VII and Rehabilitation Act programs and determine whether the agency has made a good faith effort to identify and remove barriers to equal opportunity in the workplace.

In compliance with the *No FEAR Act* and Part 1614.703 of Title 29 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, NRCS timely submitted its No FEAR Report to Congress and posted quarterly reports on its public website summarizing the statistical data relating to EEO complaints filed. Part 1614 of EEOC's regulation requires that each agency shall "establish a system for periodically evaluating the effectiveness of the agency's overall equal employment opportunity effort." See 29 C.F.R. Part 1614.102(a) (11). In particular, "each agency shall maintain a continuing affirmative program to promote equal opportunity and to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices and policies." See 29 C.F.R. Part 1614.102(a).

NRCS strives to address the low participation rates of women, minorities, and the hiring of persons with targeted disabilities. NRCS promotes diversity and inclusion by fully utilizing the employees' talents at all levels of the organization. NRCS also promoted targeted recruitment initiatives to assess workforce demographics changes; succession planning; retention and separation rates; and hiring trends. Listed below is CRD's summary review and analysis of the Agency's FY 2015 workforce profiles based on the FY 2015 MD 715 data tables provided in Appendix H.

Summary Analysis of Permanent Workforce

In FY 2015, NRCS employed 10,596 employees: 10,395 permanent and 201 temporary employees. The number of permanent employees increased by 27 from 10,368 in FY 2014 to 10,395 in FY 2015. Participation rates of White females, Black males, Black females, Hispanic males, Hispanic females, Asian males, and Asian females remain lower than the National Civilian Labor Force (NCLF).

Table 1: Summary of Permanent Workforce by Participation Rates

Permanent Workforce	Benchmark (National 2010 CLF)	FY 2014 NRCS %	FY 2015 NRCS %	Changes
White Male	38.33%	53.16%	52.57%	-0.59%
White Female	34.03%	27.59%	28.16%	+0.57%
Black Male	5.49%	4.53%	4.52%	-0.01%
Black Female	6.53%	3.70%	3.75%	+0.05%
Hispanic Male	5.17%	3.52%	3.32%	-0.20%
Hispanic Female	4.79%	1.97%	1.80%	-0.17%
Asian Male	1.97%	0.82%	0.79%	-0.03%
Asian Female	1.93%	0.59%	0.57%	-0.02%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Male	0.07%	0.20%	0.23%	+0.03%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Female	0.07%	0.19%	0.18%	-0.01%
American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) Male	0.55%	2.31%	2.20%	-0.11%
American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) Female	0.53%	1.16%	1.16%	0.00%
Two or More Races Male	0.26%	0.09%	0.38%	+0.29%
Two or More Races Female	0.28%	0.15%	0.37%	+0.22%

Of the permanent workforce, minorities increased by 0.02% from 19.25% in FY 2014 to 19.27% in FY 2015; which remained below the benchmark population of the NCLF average of 27.23%. Participation rate of women increased by 0.63% from 35.36% in FY 2014 to 35.99% in FY 2015, which remained below the

NCLF of 48.14%. Persons with disabilities represented 10.16% of the permanent workforce, which was exactly above the community benchmark of 10%.

Persons with targeted disabilities (PWTD) increased by 0.06% from 0.96% in FY 2014 to 1.02% in FY 2015, which remained below the community benchmark of 4.00%. Overall, the changes in participation rates between FY 2014 and FY 2015 were moderate. A summary of changes from FY 2014 to FY 2015 is provided in Table below.

Table 2: Summary of Permanent Workforce by Major EEO Groupings

NRCS Permanent Workforce	Benchmark	FY 2014 NRCS %	FY 2015 NRCS%	Changes
Women	48.14%	35.36%	35.99%	+0.63%
Minorities	27.64%	19.25%	19.27%	+ 0.02%
People with Disabilities	10.0%	10.09%	10.16%	+0.07%
People with Targeted Disabilities	4.0%	0.96%	1.02%	+0.06%

Summary Analysis of Identified Triggers

Low Participation Rate of Hispanic Employment

With respect to the Hispanic permanent workforce, the number of Hispanic employees decreased slightly from 569 in FY 2014 to 532 in FY 2015. There is also a decrease in the participation rate for Hispanic employees from 5.49% in FY 2014 to 5.12% in FY 2015. However, it remained significantly below the NCLF of 9.96%.

Table 3: FY 2015 NRCS Hispanic Employment Profile

	Male # (%)	Female # (%)	Total
NCLF (2010)	5.17%	4.79%	9.96%
Permanent	345 (3.32%)	187 (1.80%)	532 (5.12%)
Executive/Senior Level Managers	10 (7.94%)	0 (0.00%)	10 (7.94%)
Mid-Level Managers	17 (4.14%)	10 (2.43%)	27 (6.57%)
Officials and Managers Total	17 (2.76%)	27 (4.39%)	44 (7.15%)
SES	2 (8.33%)	0 (0%)	2 (9.09%)
Hiring Rate	33 (4.87%)	17 (2.51%)	50 (7.38%)
Separation Rate	25 (3.56%)	13 (1.85%)	38 (5.41%)

With respect to gains and losses, there was a positive trend in the hiring rate for Hispanic male and females from 5.39% in FY 2014 (11 males and 8 females) to 7.38% (33 males and 17 females) in FY 2015. The separation rate for Hispanics increased slightly from 4.90% (27 males and 8 females) in FY 2014 to 5.41% (25 males and 13 females) in FY 2015.

With respect to the Senior Executive Service (SES) grade level, Hispanics comprised 8.33% which was higher than their corresponding participation rates of 5.12%. There were two SES Hispanic males and no SES Hispanic females in the permanent workforce. The participation rate of Hispanics at the Executive/Senior leadership positions was well-represented at 7.94%, which was significantly higher than their corresponding participation rates of 5.12%.

Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant Occupation CLF for Hispanic Men and Women (see Appendix H, Table A6). Specifically, the participation rate of Hispanic males are below their relevant occupational CLF in the following major or mission critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (2.54 v. CLF of 4.20%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (3.47% v. CLF of 8.10%); Human Resource Management - 0201 (0% v. CLF 5.00%); Contracting - 1102 (0% v. CLF of 2.20%); Cartography - 1370 (3.77% v. CLF of 6.20%), Environmental Engineering - 0819 (0% v. 3.5%); and IT Management - 2210 (5.88% v. CLF 6.10%).

Participation rates of Hispanic women are below their respective occupational CLF in the following mission critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (1.05% v. CLF of 7.90%); General Biological Science - 0401 (1.48% v. CLF 2.60%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (0.25% v. CLF of 2.10%); Management Analyst - 0343 (0.78% v. CLF of 8.10%); Secretary - 0318 (3.77% v. CLF of 9.30%); Geology - 1350 (0% v. CLF 1.70%); Contracting - 1102 (4.62% v. CLF of 5.10%); IT Management - 2210 (0% v. CLF of 2.30%); and Environmental Engineering - 0819 (0% v. CLF of 1.10%).

A summary of the potential barriers and HEP efforts to eliminate the potential barriers is provided at Appendix D.

Low Participation Rate of Black Employment

With respect to the Black permanent workforce, the number of Black employees increased slightly from 854 in FY 2014, to 860 in FY 2015. Despite the increase in number, the participation rate for Black employees shows a slight increase from 8.23% in FY 2014, to 8.27% in FY 2015, which was below the NCLF of 12.02%.

Table 4: FY 2015 NRCS Black Employment Profile

	Men # (%)	Women # (%)	Total
NCLF (2010)	5.49%	6.53%	12.02%
Permanent	470 (4.52%)	390 (3.75%)	860 (8.27%)
Executive/Senior Level Managers (GS15+)	19 (15.08%)	8 (6.35%)	27 (18.83%)
Mid-Level Managers (GS 13-14)	35 (8.52%)	28 (6.81%)	63 (15.33%)
Officials and Managers Total	53 (8.64%)	120 (19.51%)	173 (28.15%)
SES	5 (20.83%)	1 (4.17%)	6 (25.00%)
Hiring Rate	37 (5.47%)	33 (4.87%)	70 (10.34%)
Separation Rate	40 (5.69%)	22 (3.13%)	62 (8.82%)

The hiring rate for Black males and females from 12.47% in FY 2014 (27 males and 17 females), to 10.34% (37 males and 33 females) in FY 2015. However, the separation rate for Blacks increased from 6.86% (26 males and 23 females) in FY 2014 to 8.82% (40 males and 22 females) in FY 2015.

With respect to the SES grade level, there were six Black SES employees (5 males and one female) in the permanent workforce. The participation rate of Blacks at the SES level was 27.28%, which was significantly higher than their corresponding participation rates of 8.23%.

Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant occupation CLF for Black men and Black women (see Appendix H, Table A6). Specifically, the participation rates of Black males are below their respective occupational CLF in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician -

0458 (2.80% v. CLF of 3.80%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (3.22% v. CLF 7.20%); Rangeland Management - 0454 (0.00% v. CLF of 1.80%); Agricultural Engineer - 0890 (1.71% v. CLF of 3.90%); Budget Analyst - 0560 (1.96% v. CLF of 4.00%); Cartography - 1370 (0.00% v. CLF of 4.00%); IT Management - 2210 (0.00% v. CLF 7.00%); Geology - 1350 (0.00% v. CLF 2.00%); and Environmental Engineer - 0819 (0.00% v. CLF of 5.10%).

Participation rates of Black females are below their respective occupational CLF in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (0.70% v. CLF of 2.80%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (0.25% v. CLF of 2.30%); Geology - 1350 (0.00% v. CLF of 1.70%) and Environmental Engineering - 0819 (0.00% v. CLF of 1.9%).

A summary of the national BEP efforts to eliminate the potential barriers is provided in Appendix D.

Low Participation Rate of Asian American (AA)

There were a total of 141 AA employees in the permanent workforce (82 males and 59 females) in FY 2015. The number of AA employees decreased from 146 in FY 2014 to 141 in FY 2015. Thus, the participation rate for AA employees shows a slight decrease of 0.05% from 1.41% in FY 2014 to 1.36% in FY 2015.

Table 5: FY 2015 NRCS Asian American Employment Profile

	Men # (%)	Women # (%)	Total # (%)
NCLF (2010)	1.97%	1.93%	3.90%
Permanent	82 (0.79%)	59 (0.57%)	141 (1.36%)
Executive/Senior Level Managers (GS15+)	0 (0.00%)	2 (1.59%)	2 (1.59%)
Mid-Level Managers (GS 13-14)	6 (1.46%)	3 (0.73%)	9 (1.19%)
Officials and Managers Total	8 (1.30%)	12 (1.95%)	20 (3.25%)
SES	0 (0%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Hiring Rate	4 (0.59%)	3 (0.44%)	7 (1.03%)
Separation Rate	6 (0.85%)	7 (1.00%)	13 (1.85%)

With respect to gains and losses, there was a slight decrease in the hiring rate for AA from 1.70% in FY 2014 (3 males and 3 females) to 1.03% (4 males and 3 females) in FY 2015, which was below their respective NCLFs of 3.9%. The separation rate for AA decreased from 1.82% (9 males and 4 females) in FY 2014, to 1.85% (6 males and 7 females) in FY 2015.

With respect to the SES level, there was no AA represented. The participation rates of AA males and females at the SES level are absent, which remain below their corresponding rates of 1.36%.

With respect to Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NH/PI), their participation rate was 0.41% in the permanent workforce, which was well above the NCLF of 0.14%. There were a total of 43 employees identified as NHPI in the permanent workforce.

Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant Occupation CLF for AA males and AA females (see Appendix H, Table A6). Specifically, the participation rates of AA men are below their respective occupational CLF in the following major/mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation - 0457 (0.55% v. CLF 0.90%); Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (0.17% v. CLF of 6.80%); Soil Science - 0470 (0.98% v. CLF 4.80%); General Biological Science - 0401 (0.37% v. CLF of 5.20%); Civil Engineering - 0810 (2.75% v. CLF 8.90%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (0.50% v. CLF of 5.7%); Miscellaneous Clerk - 0303 (0.00% v.

CLF of 0.90%); Rangeland Management - 0454 (0.36% v. CLF of 0.90%); Agricultural Engineering - 0890 (2.14% v. CLF 10.20%); Agronomy - 0471 (0.96% v. CLF of 4.80%); Human Resource Management - 0201 (1.16% v. CLF of 2.2%); Budget Analyst - 0560 (0.00% v. CLF of 2.80%); Cartography - 1370 (3.77% v. CLF of 2.80%); and Geology - 1350 (0.00% v. 2.80%).

Participation rates of AA females are below their respective occupational CLFs in the following major mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation - 0457 (0.34% v. CLF of 0.70%); Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (0.09% v. CLF of 7.90%); Soil Science - 0470 (0.16% v. CLF of 2.40%); General Biological Science - 0401 (0.92 v. CLF of 6.00%); Civil Engineering - 0810 (0.21% v. CLF of 1.80%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (0.00% v. CLF of 2.30%); Miscellaneous Clerk - 0303 (0.00% v. CLF of 0.70%); Agricultural Engineer - 0890 (0.85% v. CLF of 3.60%); Management Analyst - 0343 (1.55% v. CLF of 2.60%); Secretary - 0318 (0.94% v. CLF of 2.30%); Human Resource Management - 0201 (2.33% v. CLF of 2.7%); Contracting - 1102 (0.00% v. CLF of 4.20%); Agronomy - 0471 (0.96% v. CLF 2.40%); Geology - 1350 (0.00% v. CLF 1.00%); and Environmental Engineering - 0819 (0.00% v. CLF of 2.6%).

A summary of the Asian American/Pacific Islander Emphasis Program efforts to eliminate the potential barriers is provided in Appendix D.

Low Participation Rates of Women

In FY 2015, NRCS females represented 35.99% of the Agency's permanent workforce, which has remained below the NCLF of 48.14%. The largest female groups were White females (28.16%) and Black females (3.75%). With respect to the senior grade levels, participation rates for Hispanic females, AA females, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander females, American Indian/American Native females in the SES level and Two+ Races Women remain absent, i.e., their participation rates were below their corresponding participation rates in the permanent workforce.

Table 6: FY 2015 Participation Rates of Women by Senior Grade Levels

Permanent Workforce	White Women	Black Women	Hispanic Women	Asian Women	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Women	American Indian/Alaska Native Women	Two+ Races Women
GS-13	23.30%	7.31%	1.87%	0.51%	0.34%	1.19%	0.17%
GS-14	21.77%	11.56%	1.70%	1.36%	0.00%	1.36%	0.34%
GS-15	21.21%	6.82%	0.00%	1.52%	0.00%	0.76%	0.00%
SES	25.00%	4.17%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Relevant Benchmark (NRCS Permanent Workforce)	28.16%	3.75%	1.8%	0.57%	0.18%	1.16%	0.37%

Participation rates of NRCS females are below their respective occupational CLFs in the following major mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (24.06% v. CLF of 55.00%); Soil Science - 0470 (20.95% v. CLF of 26.40%); General Biological Science - 0401 (31.79% v. CLF of 47.70%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (9.90 v. CLF of 20.50%); Management Analyst - 0343 (56.59% v. CLF of 75.00%); and Geology - 1350 (22..22% v. CLF of 31.0%).

A summary of the Federal Women's Program efforts to eliminate the potential barriers for women is provided in Appendix D.

Low Participation Rate of Persons with Targeted Disabilities (PWTD)

NRCS has a permanent workforce of 10,395 employees in FY 2015: 10.16% of employees in the permanent workforce identified themselves as having a disability and 1.02% identified as having a targeted disability (PWTD). The participation rate of PWTD in the permanent workforce increased by 0.06% from 0.96% to 1.02%, which remained below the community benchmark of 4.0%. Within the PWTD categories, NRCS employees identified with psychiatric disability; partial paralysis; and hearing represented the highest representation among all groups with targeted disabilities respectively at 0.37%, 0.18%, and 0.14%.

Table 7: FY 2015 NRCS PWTD Employment Profiles

NRCS permanent Work Force	Persons WO Targeted Disabilities (PWOTD) # (%)	NRCS PWTD #/%
Permanent	10289 (98.98%)	106 (1.02%)
Executive/Senior Level Managers (GS15+)	124 (1.18%)	2 (1.59%)
Mid-Level Managers (GS 13-14)	410 (3.92%)	1 (0.24%)
Officials and Managers Total	600 (5.71%)	15 (2.44%)
SES	24 (0.26%)	0 (0.00%)
Hiring Rate	670 (98.97%)	7 (1.03%)
Separation Rate	695 (98.86%)	8 (1.14%)
Soil Conservation (0457)	4135 (99.26%)	31 (0.74%)
Soil Conservation Technician (0458)	1134 (99.21%)	9 (0.79%)
Soil Science (0470)	607 (99.35%)	4 (0.65%)
General Biological Science	538 (99.45%)	3 (0.55%)

With respect to the senior grade levels, participation rates for PWTD were below the relevant benchmarks. Noticeably, the participation rate for PWTD at the SES level remains absent.

Participation rates of PWTD are below the PWOTD's participation rates in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation – 0457 (0.74% v. PWOTD of 99.26%), Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (0.79% v. PWOTD of 99.21%), Soil Science-0470 (0.65% v. PWOTD of 99.35%) and General Biological Science-0401 (0.55% v. PWOTD of 99.45%).

A summary of the Disability Employment Program accomplishments and efforts to eliminate the potential barriers for PWTD is provided Part J and Appendix D of this report.

Current Issues of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

Recent events, including the filing of two EEOC lawsuits on behalf of transgender employees and an amicus brief in the 7th Circuit related to coverage of sexual orientation, have triggered increased interest about protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals under federal employment-discrimination laws. In 2012, the EEOC held that discrimination against an individual because that person is transgender (also known as gender identity discrimination) is discrimination because of sex and therefore is prohibited under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Commission has also found that discrimination against lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals based on sex-stereotypes, such as the belief that men should only date women or that women should only marry men, is discrimination on the basis of sex under Title VII. Consistent with these Commission rulings (and case law from the Supreme Court and other courts), the Commission has instructed agency investigators and attorneys that discrimination against an individual because that person is transgender is a violation of Title VII's prohibition of sex discrimination in employment. In addition, investigators and attorneys were instructed that lesbian, gay, and bisexual

individuals also may bring valid Title VII sex discrimination claims, and that the EEOC should accept charges alleging sexual-orientation-related discrimination. These allegations might include, for example, claims of sexual harassment or other kinds of sex discrimination, such as adverse actions taken because of the person's failure to conform to sex-stereotypes. In collaboration with OASCR, NRCS has been implementing the SEP priority with regard to the emphasis of LGBT issues in the workforce.

A summary report of the LGBT program activities can be found in Appendix D.

Distribution of Cash & QSI Awards

Cash Awards:

There were 1268 employees received cash awards between \$100 and \$500 and 5,007 employees received cash awards of \$500 and more. For awards under \$500, the average was \$362. For awards over \$500, the average was \$1,096.

The largest group to receive cash awards between \$100 and \$500 was White male employees at 48.50% followed by White female employees at 31.78%. Black male employees received 4.34% and Black females at 3.47% of the awards between \$100 and \$500. Hispanic male employees received 3.39% while Hispanic female employees received 2.05% of awards between \$100 and \$500.

The largest group to receive cash awards of \$500 and more was White male employees at 50.87% with an average amount of \$1,102; followed by White female employees at 30.22% with an average of \$1,073. Black male employees received 3.97% with an average of \$1,211 and Black female employees at 4.01% with an average of \$1,118. Hispanics males and females both received 3.54% and 2.12% respectively, in an average of \$1,157 and \$990 respectively in the category for cash awards over \$500.

American Indian/Alaskan Native males and females received 2.10% and 1.38 respectively, in an average amount of \$1,082 and \$1,088 for cash awards over \$500. Asians males and females received 0.82% and 0.75%, respectively, of an average amount of \$1,060 and \$1,053 for cash awards over \$500.

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander males and females received 0.10% and 0.12% respectively, in an average amount of \$1,333 and \$938 for cash awards over \$500.

Employees with disabilities received 9.11% in an average amount of \$1,095 for cash award over \$500. Employees with targeted disabilities received 0.74% in an average amount of \$1,078 for cash award over \$500.

Quality Step Increase (QSI):

Two hundred sixty-seven (267) employees received QSIs with an average benefit amount of \$1,874. The largest group to receive this award was White males with 40.07%. The next largest groups were White females with 36.33% followed by Black females with 7.12% and Black males with 4.49%. The third largest groups were Hispanic males 3.37% and Hispanic females at 3.00%.

Employees with disabilities received this award at a rate of 8.61% and employees with targeted disabilities at 0.75%.

For detailed information, see Appendix H Table A13/B13.

FY 2015 Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) Results

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) deploys the FEVS survey each year as mandated by law. A sample size of employees are invited by OPM to participate and complete the survey. Large participation rates help to validate data from the survey findings. In FY 2014, NRCS recognized an 81% participation rate which was 16% over the 2013 rate. The 2015 survey closed on June 12, 2015, and final information is not available as of date (November 2015). However, preliminary reports show that the 2015 participation rate is at 73% and 14.2% above the Department.

A new OPM report in the 2014 FEVS is the New Inclusion Quotient (IQ). It is designed to measure employee feedback about an organizations inclusiveness. Five elements are used to score agencies - Fair, Open, Cooperative, Supporting, and Empowering. Twenty questions in the FEVS represent the five elements. NRCS score is at 60% for 2014 and is above the Government (56%) and USDA (57%). Due to activity of 2-2-2 Planning, it is expected that the 2015 score will remain the same or stretch higher than 2014.

Leadership demonstrated further commitment to ensuring that NRCS creates and maintains an inclusive work environment with equal opportunity for all employees to reach their full potential by reaffirming a solid commitment to the USDA Civil Rights goals and obligations by issuing: a new Civil Rights Policy Statement to all employees at the beginning of the calendar year; and Special Emphasis observance notices throughout the year.

The FY 2015 results will be incorporated in the FY 2016 barrier analysis.

Essential Element E: Efficiency

This element requires agencies to have an efficient and fair dispute resolution process and effective systems for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of their EEO programs. CRD, working collaboratively with OASCR, ensures that individual complaints are fairly and thoroughly investigated and that final action is taken in a timely manner. See 29 C.F.R. Part 1614.102(c) (5). Section II (E) of the MD-715 establishes that a “model EEO program” must have an efficient and fair dispute resolution process and effective systems for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of its EEO programs. In this regard, Section II (E) recommends that agencies “benchmark against EEOC regulations at 29 C.F.R. Part 1614 and other Federal agencies of similar size which are highly ranked in EEOC’s Annual Report on the Federal sector complaints process.”

(1) Title VII Pre-complaint Stage:

Pre-complaint Stage	FY 2014	FY 2015	Expectations
Number of informal counseling’s completed	56	48	Exceeded
ADR Outcomes			
ADR Offer Rate (Goal $\geq 90\%$)	95% (53)	98% (47)	Exceeded
ADR Participation Rate (Goal $\geq 50\%$)	68% (38)	70% (33)	Exceeded
ADR Resolution Rate (Goal $\geq 50\%$)	37% (14)	41% (11)	Improved
Counseling Outcomes			
Timely counseling (goal $> 90\%$)	88% (49)	92% (44)	Exceeded
Cases untimely counseled within 31-days	0% (0)	2% (1)	Needs Improvement
Cases untimely counseled beyond 90 days (Goal: $< 0\%$)	13% (7)	6% (3)	Improved
The Counselor’s Resolution Rate (Goal $\geq 50\%$)	11% (2)	29% (6)	Improved
Percentages of Counselor Report Submitted Timely to ASCR (Goal 15 days)	73%	90%	Improved
Total Pre-complaint Outcomes			
Total Resolution Rate (Goal: $\geq 50\%$)	25%	35%	Needs Improvement

Exceeded Expectations:

- Achieved a 14% reduction in pre-complaint filings in FY 2015.
- The ADR Offer rate increased by 3% from 95% in FY 2014 to 98% in FY 2015, which exceeded the agency’s goal of $\geq 90\%$.

- The ADR Participation rate increased by 2% from 68% in FY 2014 to 70% in FY 2015, which exceeded the agency's goal of $\geq 50\%$.
- Informal Cases timely counseled increased by 4% from 88% in FY 2014 to 92% in FY 2015, which exceeded the agency's goal of $\geq 90\%$.

Metrics Improved:

- The ADR Resolution rate improved by 4% from 37% in FY 2014 to 41% in FY 2015.
- Cases untimely counseled beyond 90 days decreased by 7% from 13% in FY 2014 to 6% in FY 2015.
- The Counselor's resolution rate increased by 18% from 11% in FY 2014 to 29% in FY 2015.

Need Improvement:

- Cases untimely counseled within 31-90 days increased by 2% from 0% in FY 2014 to 2% in FY 2015. The agency's goal of $< 0\%$ is not achieved.
- The total resolution rate at the pre-complaint stage increased by 10% from 25% in FY 2014 to 35% in FY 2015. The agency's goal of $\geq 50\%$ is not achieved.

(2) Use of ADR:

In FY 2015, the offer rate of ADR at the pre-complaint stage of the EEO complaint process was 98%, which is higher than the Federal government average of 85.7%. This was due in large part to the enhanced collaboration, marketing and outreach of the ADR Center and CRD staff. These efforts included agency-wide promotion of the use of ADR to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage. The ADR team continued collaborating with the State Conservationists and senior leaders to conduct training and provide employees with information related to ADR services such as facilitation, teambuilding, conflict resolution, coaching and mentoring services.

Table 8: Complaint Rate and ADR Usage in the Pre-complaint Stage, 5-Year Trend

Fiscal Years	NRCS Work Force	# of Pre-complaints	Complaint Rate	ADR Offer Rate	ADR Election Rate	ADR Resolution Rate
2011	12296	45	0.4%	68.9%	64.5%	65.0%
2012	11821	74	0.6%	86.5%	70.3%	35.6%
2013	11162	74	0.7%	86.5%	75.0%	47.9%
2014	10740	56	0.5%	94.6%	71.7%	36.8%
2015	10395	48	0.2%	98.0%	70%	41.0%

(3) Formal Complaints Stage:

Caseload	FY 2014	FY 2015	Expectations
Number of formal complaints	42	32	Exceeded
Number of remands	2	0	Exceeded
Number of Complaints on hand at the end of this reporting period	72	54	Improved
ADR Outcomes			
ADR Offer Rate (goal: $> 50\%$)	19% (8)	25% (8)	Needs Improvement
ADR Participation Rate (Goal: $\geq 25\%$)	100% (8)	88% (7)	Exceeded

ADR Resolution Rate (Goal: > 50%)	63% (5)	80% (4)	Exceeded
Investigation Outcomes			
Number of investigations completed	44	26	Exceeded
Number of cases timely investigated in accordance with EEOC timeframes (Goal: >90%)	59% (26)	81% (21)	Improved
Investigations untimely completed in accordance with EEOC timeframes (Goal < 10%)	41% (18)	19% (5)	Improved
Average processing time for unamended investigations (The goal is at least below 18 days)	154	139	Exceeded
Average processing time for amended investigations (The goal is 220 days)	277	230	Improved
Final Deposition			
Percentage (#) of cases dismissed for procedural reasons	17% (7)	6% (3)	N/A
Percentage (#) of merit FAD timely issued	20% (4)	42% (5)	Improved
Number of Settlements with benefits/Cost	11 \$110,231	18 \$323,795	N/A
Number of Finding of Discrimination	1	0	Exceeded

Exceeded Expectations:

- There is a 24% decrease in the complaints that filed formal from 42 cases in FY 2014 to 32 cases in FY 2015.
- The ADR participation rate decreased by 12 from 100% in FY 2014 to 88% in FY 2015 which remained above the goal of $\geq 25\%$.
- The ADR resolution rate increased by 17% from 63% in FY 2014 to 80% in FY 2015, which exceeded the agency's goal of $\geq 50\%$.

Improved:

- The number of cases timely investigated in accordance with EEOC timeframes increased by 22% from 59% in FY 2014 to 81% in FY 2015.
- The number of cases untimely investigated in accordance with EEOC timeframes decreased by 22% from 41% in FY 2014 to 19% in FY 2015.
- The average processing time for amended investigations decreased from 277 days in FY 2014 to 230 days in FY 2015.
- The percentage of merit FAD's timely issued increased by 22% from 20% in FY 2014 to 40% in FY 2015.

Need Improvement:

- The ADR Offer rate increased by 6% from 19% in FY 2014 to 25% in FY 2015, which is below the agency's goal of $\geq 50\%$.

- a. Investigations: Investigations into claims of discrimination are a key component of the formal EEO complaint process. Delays may impede the primary goal of gathering sufficient evidence to permit a determination as to whether discrimination occurred. EEOC regulation 29 C.F.R. §1614.106(e)(2) requires agencies to conduct an investigation and issue a report to the complainant within 180 days of the filing of a complaint unless: 1) the parties agreed to an extension of no more than 90 days (may not exceed 270 days); or 2) the complaint was amended or consolidated, which can add another 180 days to the period but may not exceed a total of 360 days.

The percentage of timely investigations for formal complaints increased from 37% in FY 2011 to 75% in FY 2015, which was below the Department's goal of 90%. The average cost of NRCS EEO contracting out investigations was \$3,484, which was higher than the government-wide average cost of \$2,811 (for contracting out complaint investigations).

**Table 9: Average Processing Time for NRCS EEO Investigations,
5-Year Trend (Part IX, Form 462 Reports)**

Fiscal Years	# of Formal Filed	# of Investigations Completed	# of timely investigations	% of Timely Investigations	Average Processing Days for All Investigations (including amended cases)	Average Cost per Investigation (Director Cost Reported)
2011	29	27	10	37.0%	308	\$2,530
2012	39	22	17	77.3%	189	\$2,552
2013	43	30	12	40.0%	213	\$2,975
2014	42	44	26	59.1%	220	\$3,055
2015	32	26	21	81.0%	139	\$3,406

b. Final Agency Decision (FAD):

EEOC regulations require agencies to issue merit final agency decisions (FADs) within 60 days of receiving notification that a complainant has requested an immediate decision from the agency, or within 60 days of the end of the 30-day period for the complainant to request a hearing or an immediate final decision, where the complainant has not requested either a hearing or a FAD.

Routinely, OASCR provided management service to NRCS in processing the formal complaints filed against NRCS at the headquarters level, including the drafting and the issuance of agency-wide FADs. In FY 2015, OASCR issued 5 merit FADs with an average processing time of 105 days, which is a significant improvement compared to the processing time of 281 days in FY 2011. Of the 5 merit FADs issued, 2 (40%) were timely issued within 60 days, which was below the government-wide average of 48.6%. With respect to this requirement, OASCR strives to achieve process improvement for cost efficiency and timeliness in the issuance of merit FADs.

**Table 10: Department's Average Processing Time to Issue Merit FADs
(Part VI D, Form 462 Reports)**

Fiscal Years	# of Merit FADs Issued	Average Days	# of Merit FADs Timely Issued	% of Merit FADs Timely Issued
2011	17	226	4	23.5%
2012	8	296	4	50.0%
2013	9	64	5	55.6%
2014	16	102	4	25.0%
2015	5	105	2	40.0%

Further, NRCS routinely prepared the State Conservationist's CR Performance (Appraisals) Report which is an management tool used to evaluated all 50 States and U.S. Territories on their CR performance. NRCS continued improvements in the area of complaints management to streamline workflow; enhance process efficiencies; improve customer service; and incorporate accountability.

NRCS continued working with OASCR to achieve performance metrics and process improvement by revising standard operating procedures and providing internal training on work process. Jointly, NRCS utilizes the Department's enterprise system (known as iComplaints), for complaint tracking and monitoring which identifies and tracks the status of the EEO complaint process stages. The system allows CRD staff to identify/analyze the location, status, and length of time elapsed at each stage of the Agency's complaints resolution process; the issues and the bases of the complaints; the aggrieved individuals/complainants that involved management officials; and other information necessary to analyze complaint activity aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the Agency's EEO program.

Essential Element F: Responsiveness and Legal Compliance

This element assesses whether the Agency complies with the law, including EEOC regulations, directives, orders, and other written instructions and whether the Agency reports are promptly submitted to EEOC.

In FY 2015, there was no finding of discrimination by EEOC. Also, there were no instances of untimely responses to EEOC orders or settlements. CRD was also very responsive to all of EEOC's requests for information. No remands or notices for failure to comply with EEOC's orders were issued.

In accordance with EEO MD-110, NRCS ensured that experienced counselors and contract investigators received the required 32 hours of training and the annual 8-hour refresher training.

CRD staff responded to all customer inquiries within two days of the date of contact, and provided information for data requests by established due dates. In particular, CRD routinely sent the complaint file to the EEOC field office within five calendar days upon receipt of the hearing notice. During the appellate stage of the EEO complaint process, all complaint files were forwarded to EEOC electronically via the EEOC File Exchange (EFX) well within the required time frame.

The processing of monetary agreements is conducted by the responsible NHQ and/or State Official. Documentation for completing compliance is promptly provided and reviewed by CRD. All settlement agreements were fully implemented. In addition, NRCS implemented all EEOC orders in a timely manner. There were no discrepancies found in this element

FY 2015 Action Items and Key Accomplishments

1. Providing annual Civil Rights and Diversity training and OASCR mandatory training (e.g. LGBT)

In FY 2015, the OASCR mandatory training on the topic of "LGBT" has been postponed while awaiting OASCR's guidance in launching the online USDA-wide LGBT training module. NRCS' Civil Rights Division, in collaboration with the OASCR Early Resolution and Conciliation Division (ERCD), has offered a few LGBT training sessions to different groups including the Agency's NSEPMs, and the Civil Rights and Human Resources staff throughout the fiscal year.

Also, in FY 2015, the Civil Rights staff implemented a comprehensive training catalog to supervisors, managers and employees. Topics included mandatory *No FEAR Act* training, CR Compliance and Program Delivery Update, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), EEO Program, and Management Directive (MD) 715 training. State offices also provided various CR/EEO training during employee meetings to inform them about their rights and responsibilities in the EEO process.

Throughout FY 2015 NRCS continued the collaborative relationships with OASCR and the community at-large to provide ADR training to the workforce, and ensured the dissemination of ADR information and training such as Facilitation, Teambuilding, Conflict Resolution, direct hiring authorities, and hiring opportunities for Veteran and persons with disabilities.

Training for recruiters was developed that involves information regarding hiring authorities, targeting recruitment, and conducting recruiting events, etc. The training for hiring managers has been completed

which addresses hiring of veterans and hiring of individuals with disabilities. One hundred percent (100%) of all hiring managers and 99% of all supervisors in the Agency have completed the training. OPM's Veteran Hiring training has been completed by 99% of all HR staff. Pathways training was completed by 99.9% of all supervisors including information on adjudication of veterans.

2. Promoting a workplace free of reprisal or harassment

"It is NRCS' policy to treat all customers and employees equitably regardless of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and expression), religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, parental status, and protected genetic information. It is also the Agency's policy that customers and employees be free from reprisal or harassment in the pursuit of fairness and equal employment opportunities." (See FY 2015 NRCS Civil Rights Policy Statement in Appendix E.)

Pursuant to the EEOC's MD 715 guidance, all Federal managers, supervisors, human resource specialists and EEO officials are held accountable for the effective implementation of the agency's anti-harassment policy in an effort to achieve a "model EEO program." The Civil Rights staff routinely works with the Human Resources staff to develop internal procedures and guidelines to examine policies and regulations to ensure equal employment opportunities for the workforce. Managers, supervisors and employees are held accountable for civil rights program implementation and compliance in their performance standards to support the Agency's effort of promoting a workplace free of reprisal and harassment. All managers and employees are required to have a stand-alone CR/EEO performance element.

During the Technical Assistance briefing with EEOC in FY 2015, the Civil Rights staff was encouraged to develop an internal program to address anti-harassment policy and procedures. The program draft has been submitted to HR for review and comment. In collaboration with OASCR staff, the NRCS Civil Rights team conducted training on the prevention of harassment and retaliation upon request.

NRCS ensured that the CR policy complies with current regulatory requirements and that those policies are clearly understood by all employees. NRCS demonstrates leadership commitment and fully supports the principles and requirements of the No FEAR act that strictly prohibits the abuse of official authority or position to intimidate, coerce, or harass employees or customers. To reaffirm to managers and supervisor that they are subject to receive disciplinary or adverse action for tolerating harassment and failing to take appropriate and immediate action when harassment is reported, NRCS continuously enforces that "Accountability is no longer an option, it is a Reality."

The No FEAR Act training is mandatory for all new employees within the first 90 days reporting to duty and is required bi-annually for all employees. The completion rate of No FEAR Act training was 99.9 percent during FY 2015. In summary, NRCS strives to promote a workforce free of retaliation and harassment by removing any potential barriers that may hinder equal employment opportunity to attract, develop, and retain a highly quality workforce.

3. Managing an effective ADR Program

During this reporting period, the NRCS, Civil Rights Division (CRD) increased resources by hiring an additional EEO Specialist to coordinate ADR activities for EEO and workplace disputes. The ADR Team conducted consultations to resolve conflict at the lowest level prior to the filing of an EEO complaint or an administrative grievance. The use of ADR in NRCS is widespread as evident by the following: The election of ADR in the informal stage has increased from 64.5% in FY 2011 to 70% in FY 2015. The offer rate of ADR in the informal stage increased from 68.9% in FY 2011 to 98.0% in FY 2015 as of this date.

Of a total of 48 informal complainants that completed counseling in FY 2015, 98% (44/48) of cases were offered ADR. Of the 44 cases offered ADR, 70% (33/44) of the aggrieved individuals elected to participate in the ADR process. The offer rate of ADR at the pre-complaint stage of the EEO complaint process was 98.0%, which is above the Federal government average of 85.7%. The excellent result was due in large part to the enhanced collaboration, marketing and outreach of the ADR Team and EEO staff. These efforts included the Agency-wide promotion of the use of ADR to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage. The ADR team continued collaborating with the State Conservationists and senior leaders to conduct training and provided employees' information related to ADR services such as Facilitation, Teambuilding, Conflict Resolution, coaching and mentoring services.

Table 11: Complaint Rate and ADR Usage in the Pre-complaint Stage, 5-Year Trend

Fiscal Years	NRCS Work Force	# of Pre-complaints	Complaint Rate	ADR Offer Rate	ADR Election Rate	ADR Resolution Rate
2011	12296	45	0.4%	68.9%	64.5%	65.0%
2012	11821	74	0.6%	86.5%	70.3%	35.6%
2013	11162	74	0.7%	86.5%	75.0%	47.9%
2014	10740	56	0.5%	94.6%	71.7%	36.8%
2015	10395	48	0.2%	98.0%	70%	41.0%

In compliance with USDA's DR 4710-001 regarding ADR, management officials named as the "Responsible Management Official" did not serve as the "Resolving Official" in an ADR session. This policy was practiced daily by NRCS in ensuring the designated "Resolving Official" was not involved in the facts of the matter and had full authority to resolve the conflict. All NRCS management officials designated to serve as the "Resolving Official" were assigned the authority to make, change, accept and approve proposals for resolution during an ADR session.

Also, in order to increase their efforts in participating in the ADR session in good faith, the ADR Team provided in depth consultations with the Agency Resolving Officials to increase their knowledge of the ADR process and their roles and responsibilities. The ADR resolution rate during the Early Intervention stage decreased from 83% in FY 2011 to 50% in FY 2015. Although the number of Early Intervention resolutions have decreased since FY 2011, the ADR Team has conducted 8 (Eight) consultations in FY 2015 resulting in resolutions prior to the employees initiating an EEO complaint or Grievance.

Table 12: ADR Usage in the Early Intervention Stage, 5-Year Trend

Fiscal Years	# of Early Intervention Mediations Conducted	# of Early Intervention Mediations Resolved	Early Intervention Resolution Rate
2011	12	10	83%
2012	6	6	100%
2013	13	11	85%
2014	18	15	83%
2015	5	3	60%

The ADR resolution rate during the Administrative Grievance process increased from 50% in FY 2011 to 100% in FY 2014. As of the current reporting period, one Administrative Grievance was conducted and resolved.

Table 13: ADR Usage in the Administrative Grievance Process, 5 Year Trend

Fiscal Years	# of Administrative Grievance Conducted	# of Administrative Grievance Resolved	Administrative Grievance Resolution Rate
2011	4	2	50%
2012	2	1	50%
2013	2	1	50%
2014	1	1	100%
2015	1	1	100%

As of current, the ADR Team conducted 249 consultations with NRCS employees, managers and supervisors regarding the Early Intervention, EEO and Grievance process. The consultations served as an effective way to increase participants' knowledge of the ADR program as well as alleviate pre-conceived notions regarding the process. This practice also eliminated any barriers the parties would encounter during their participation in mediation.

Table 14: ADR Workload – FY 2015

	Pre-Complaint	Formal Complaint	Administrative Grievance	Early Intervention	Total Workload
# of Cases	47	8	1	5	61
Offer Rate	98.0%	25%	100%	100%	
Election Rate	70.0%	88%	100%	100%	
Resolution Rate	41.0%	80%	100%	60%	
ADR Sessions Held	27	8	1	3	24

The ADR Team also increased the utilization of consultations with employees during the EIP. In utilizing this alternative method, the Agency was successful in resolving 90% of EIP disputes (28/31) prior to mediation. As a result of our consultations, the employees were satisfied with our discussion and did not initiate an EEO complaint or grievance.

The NRCS CRD demonstrated compliance with other Federal and USDA ADR regulatory requirements by offering ADR during the Early Intervention stage; EEO Pre-Complaint (Informal) and Formal Stages; Administrative Grievance Process; and program complaints. NRCS employees who file an EEO Pre-Complaint or Formal complaint are contacted within three business days after the election for mediation is made.

One of the continued goals of the NRCS ADR program was to frequently monitor and adhere to all USDA ADR regulatory requirements. In doing so, the ADR team maintained a weekly report with detailed information pertaining to all cases referred to ADR and updated the Department's Early Resolution and Conciliation Division (ERCD), Entellitrak database. This process assisted the ADR Team in providing accurate data to ERCD.

In FY 2015, the NRCS ADR Team developed an ADR Formal Election form and letter to disseminate to employees offering mediation during the Formal EEO complaint stage. This demonstrated the Agency's efforts in offering ADR during all stages of the EEO complaint process.

The ADR Team participated in an interview with the Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program contracted by ERCD on Tuesday, March 17, 2015. The purpose of the interview was to obtain information regarding the NRCS, ADR Program.

Also, to maintain the qualified status as an ADR practitioner, members of the ADR Team attended the Justice Center of Atlanta Training; Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution Training; Graduate School USA and participated in the ERCD Annual Conflict Resolution Day.

Because of the proactive management of the CRD team, all ADR sessions are a good faith effort for 100 percent of EEO cases within the timeframes set by EEOC regulations.

The ADR Team was committed to making ADR training available to all NRCS employees, managers, supervisors and customers. In FY 2015, the ADR Team developed a conflict management training series which provided a variety of Conflict Management and ADR related topics.

In conjunction with the US Forest Service, NRCS provided a 2-hour live meeting webinar on “Working with You is Tough” on Wednesday, June 3, 2015. The training was conducted by Ms. Linda Burroughs-Glover, ADR Specialist, US Forest Service, resulting in 818 participants. An additional 30 employees participated in the training after the Live Meeting webinar was conducted, resulting in a grand total of 848 employees receiving training. This training set a record number of participants for NRCS and the Forest Service.

As a result of Secretary Vilsack’s initiative to strengthen the ADR function in USDA, NRCS’ partnership with ERCD continues to increase by encouraging employees’ participation in training workshops and webinars conducted by ERCD. The ADR Team has also developed an ADR Survey to ascertain employees’ current knowledge of ADR. The survey will assist us in developing training topics for FY 2016.

The NRCS, Collateral Duty Mediator (CDM) cadre consisted of 8 permanent employees, GS-7 through GS-13, with a “superior or above rating.” Each CDM required the concurrence of their immediate supervisor to apply. In addition, their most recent performance appraisal and KSA responses were required for submission. The CDMs are required to serve three years and be able to devote up to 20% of their time to this endeavor. The current cadre consists of mediators that have served more than three years because of their invaluable skills.

The NRCS Collateral Duty Mediator (CDM) cadre has been highly effective utilizing mediation skills obtained through the Justice Center of Atlanta (JCA) and refresher training provided by the Department’s ERCD. Due to factors such as retirements, funding, reorganizations and reassignments, the cadre now consists of four collateral duty mediators. The CDMs are located in Alabama, Arizona, California and Florida. In addition, eight Civil Rights Division (CRD) employees are mediators.

The roles and responsibilities of the cadre are to engage in using mediation and other appropriate ADR techniques to resolve workplace disputes involving NRCS employees and customers. The cadre conducts mediation sessions across all organizational boundaries in order to provide all employees and customers with conflict resolution services. The cadre is able to effectively communicate; remain neutral and utilize interpersonal skills to assist parties in conflict; clarify issues; and use problem-solving techniques and facilitation skills during the mediation process. The cadre also has a working knowledge

of ADR; EEO; the Administrative Grievance Process; Early Intervention of Workplace Disputes; and conflict resolution techniques

ADR assignments are delegated by the ADR Specialists based on the availability of the mediators, the complaint issues and location of the parties. Ongoing training is also provided by the USA Graduate School and ERCD.

As a result of teamwork, the cadre continued to be instrumental in assisting parties in reaching amicable resolutions during the Early Intervention and EEO Complaint stages as well as resulting in a cost-saving for the agency. During FY 2015, a focus for the ADR Team was to maintain an increased utilization of the CDMs. To adequately provide additional ADR opportunities for the CDM cadre, they were included as a resource on the Health and Human Services (HHS), Shared Neutrals Program (SNP) mediator cadre list.

Also, in compliance with the Department regulations, NRCS has utilized the services of qualified neutrals with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS); Federal Executive Board (FEB); and the JCA.

4. Promoting Targeted Recruitment Efforts

NRCS does recognize the need to have a dedicated workforce planning tool which is now available to leadership agency-wide to ensure that decisions regarding the workforce are made strategically with clear, consistent and complete information.

Since FY 2009, NRCS has established a design team to review the current state of workforce planning, establish a vision for what the perfect system would be; and then to identify gaps between the current state and the vision.

- Workforce Planning Policy - In FY 2010, The Workforce Planning Policy was developed and finalized - General Manual 360, Subpart A, Part 402.
- ABC Enhancement Initiative – Activity-Based Costing (ABC) is a system which measures productivity based on past performance time and needs. Analysis of the data will feed into the WFP Software Tool to address the FTE “demand” needs of the Agency.
- Workforce Planning Software Tool: To implement a WFP process and system (tool) that will determine workload demand supply and gaps; competency demand supply and gaps, as well as workforce profile supply demand and gaps. Work has begun on this process.

NRCS has updated a national recruitment framework which was approved in FY 2014 by NRCS leadership. This strategic document has been the foundation of the recruitment events at NRCS for FY 14 and will continue through FY 17. This strategic plan aligns with the USDA Strategic Plan, the NRCS Strategic Plan and the NRCS Human Capital Strategic Plan.

During FY 2015, the following initiatives identified in the Recruitment Strategy have been implemented:

- Increasing identification of partnerships that will support diverse candidate pools. NRCS has added one additional partnership as well as worked to enhance our previous efforts and currently have partnerships with the following:
 - Thurgood Marshall College Fund
 - Minorities in Agriculture and Natural Resources Related Sciences (MANRRS)

- American Indians Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
- Hmong National Development
- FFA Career Development Experience
- California State Polytechnic University – Pomona
- Increase number of Presentations to Diversity Groups
 - MANRRS National Conference
 - Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute
 - Five AISES regional conferences
 - FFA National and Regional conferences (5)
 - NRCS-NAFEO* Scholars Days (*National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education)
- Recruited diverse candidates at the following Career Events:
 - MANRRS National Conference
 - MANRRS Regional Conferences (3)
 - Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute
 - AISES Conferences
 - FFA National Conferences

A National Recruitment Cadre is in the early stages of planning for helping to implement the National Recruitment Framework and will continue working with these individuals through FY 14 and into FY 15.

NRCS' Hispanic, Black, AA, and AI/AN recruitment cadres have been established and continue to gain success through the utilization of strong ties to campus involvement. Relationships have been established which allow NRCS to have a presence in classrooms while on campuses for recruitment fairs. Recruitment teams also hosted events for agricultural-related student groups so that students would have additional access to staff members. From our contacts at career fairs, a database was created with information that was shared with other areas of NRCS. The database has proven to be a good source to recruit women and minority interns and new permanent employees.

Diversity recruitment efforts existed throughout the Agency. The Agency recruited students and entry-level hires at the following recruitment events:

- American Indian Agriculture Symposium, Las Vegas, NV
- American Indian Science and Engineering Fair (NAISEF), Albuquerque, NM
- American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
- Black Engineer of the Year Conference
- California State Polytechnic University Career Fair, Pomona, CA
- Conference on Asian Pacific American Leaders (CAPAL)
- Federal Asian Pacific American Council Conference (FAPAC)
- Florida A & M (1894)
- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
- HACU Career Fair
- Hiring Heroes Career Fair, Little Rock, AK
- League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) national conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico
- LULACs National Veterans Summit, Los Angeles, CA
- Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS)

- New Mexico State University Career Fair, Las Cruces, NM
- Society for Range Management
- Texas A&M University Career Fair, Kingsville, TX
- Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute Conference
- Tuskegee University
- University of Puerto Rico Career Fair, Mayaguez, PR
- University of Texas Career Fair, El Paso, TX
- Wounded Warriors Career Fair, LA,
- Four MANRRS regional conferences
- MANRRS National conference
- Five AISES regional conferences
- Two National AISES conferences
- Latino Education Conference (Faculty members of HSIs)
- League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) national conference
- HSI Student Leadership Program for Ag Students
- FFA Regional Conference
- Presentations at HSIs in Illinois, Florida, California
- Hispanic Leaders in Agriculture Environment (HLAE) at Texas A&M
- National Hispanic Environmental Council for Students Summer Institute
- Federally Employed Women (FEW) Conference, New Orleans, LA

NRCS Hmong Initiative: A Partnership between NRCS and the Hmong American Partnership/Hmong National Development, Inc. Since FY 2011, NRCS began working with the Hmong National Development (HND) and its subsidiary Hmong American Partnership (HAP). This partnership resulted in the formation of an agreement which is structured as follows:

- HAP office in St. Paul, MN selected 15 secondary students who have an interest in science-based curriculum. Most are juniors and seniors in High School with a small number in first year of college.
- The students will meet on a weekly basis for a period of seven months for a two hour learning session. NRCS has supplied curriculum based on natural resources and environmental issues which will be used during those sessions.
- Each student has a local mentor assigned from NRCS. It is anticipated that the mentors or other local staff will be speaking with the students to share real life NRCS experiences that correspond to the curriculum they are being taught.
- Training related to the Hmong culture was presented this week by the HAP staff to the 15 Minnesota staff members who volunteered to be mentors. Mentoring training was also conducted with all of the NRCS mentors.
- Special events are being planned to include the NRCS mentors and the students such as field trips to NRCS and social gatherings with the student's families.
- A capstone project will be completed by the students and presented to NRCS at the end of the seven-month timeframe. This capstone project will be collaboration between NRCS mentors and staff and the students to improve NRCS efforts in recruitment; this will include identifying cultural barriers and ways to overcome them, cultural information to share with NRCS employees, and what experiences students would like to have when learning about NRCS and what we do.

5. Implementing Special Emphasis Program

NRCS also promotes employee engagement and outreach activities within the EEO community via the establishment of Special Emphasis Programs. NRCS has a cadre of eight National Special Emphasis Program Managers (NSEPMs) (i.e., American Indian/Alaska Native Emphasis Program; Asian American/Pacific Islander Emphasis Program; Black Emphasis Program; Disability Emphasis Program; Federal Women's Program (FWP); Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Emphasis Program; Hispanic Emphasis Program (HEP); and Veterans Emphasis Program). The National FWP and HEP are full-time managers and the other five NSEPMs are collateral duty assignments. Additionally, NRCS has over 300 collateral duty SEPMS nationally in each State and Center for each of the eight SEPs listed above.

In FY 2014, National SEPMS developed an online quarterly report survey that was completed by 313 State SEPMS; an 80% response rate. The SEPMS responded to 28 questions to identify triggers, barriers and recommendations to eliminate barriers related to recruitment, hiring, retention, and career development. The individual reports were consolidated into one report with a summary of barriers and recommendations and distributed to agency Deputy Chief for Management.

The National SEPMS strengthened partnerships with SEPMS in the States to conduct barrier analyses and assist in diversity management within NRCS. NSEPMs report to the director of Talent Management Division and work closely with the States SEPMS to strengthen partnerships agency-wide to implement the diversity and EEO related initiatives such as providing training activities via diverse speakers; planning ethnic observance programs; promoting program awareness; and engaging the workforce via barrier analysis.

Summary of EEO Plan Objectives Planned to Eliminate Identified Barriers

In the upcoming year, NRCS CRD will work closely with NSEPMs and HR officials to address the identified barriers in Part I of this report, and take the following actions to remove any potential program deficiencies and barriers:

1. Increase Participation Rates of Minorities and Women in the Workforce
 - Establish a MD 715 affirmative employment work group to discuss the ongoing recruitment and hiring initiatives and efforts in removing potential barriers that may affect the employment opportunities for women, minorities and persons with targeted disabilities
 - Encourage managers to take affirmative steps to recruit, hire, train, and promote employees from diverse backgrounds.
2. Improve Retention of Minorities
 - Engage SEPMS and representatives from employee resource groups to discuss the Employee Viewpoint Survey results and develop a plan of action to address the areas that need improvement
 - Identify factors contributing to the net losses of minorities and women and develop a strategy for addressing these factors within the agency's control.
3. Increase Advancement Opportunities for Minorities and Women

- Ensure that performance expectations are clearly communicated; promotion opportunities are announced in a non-discriminatory fashion; and developmental assignments and training opportunities are openly and equitably provided.

4. Increase Representation of Persons with Targeted Disabilities (PWTD)

- Develop a NRCS Action/Hiring Plan for PWTD
- Collaborate with NDEPMs to ensure that training and workshops are provided to managers and supervisors on the use of special hiring authorities for qualified individuals with disabilities, reasonable accommodations, ADR and prevention of harassment
- Disseminate job announcements for targeted job series to the EEO community and other diverse constituent groups
- Promote outreach activities by working closely with State SEPMs, the HR Veterans Employment Program (VEP), and selective placement coordinators
- Strengthen partnerships with State SEPMs to address the effectiveness of recruitment, career development and retention initiatives for PWTD.

5. Improve Data Accuracy for Barrier Analyses

- Collaborate with HR staff in correcting the program deficiencies as related to applicant pool data
- Establish an award recognition system to recognize collateral duty SEPMs and CR/EEO members who demonstrate outstanding contributions to the MD 715 affirmative employment program goals
- Provide MD 715 training to collateral duty members of NSEPMs and the CR Advisory Council.

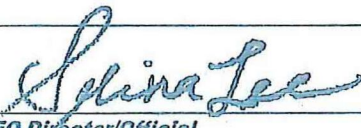

6. Correct Program Deficiencies

- Continue to host collaborative meetings with OASCR to seek process improvement in addressing efficiency in processing and managing the EEO complaints process
- Develop innovative and premier training for EEO practitioners about the use of the iComplaints system and the application of strategic evaluation to improve the timeliness and the quality of EEO services

7. Promote Early Resolution of EEO Complaints







- Host a series of workshops, seminars, and group sessions to keep supervisors and employees aware of the preventive effort in eliminating discrimination/harassment in the workplace
- Provide facilitation services to help better manage and address conflict by determining team values and conflict resolution styles. Provide supervisors and managers specific conflict management training and educate management officials about the EEO process when dealing with allegations of discrimination.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Annual EEO Program Status Report
EEOC FORM 715-01 Part F**

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART F	<p align="center"><i>For period covering October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015</i></p>
<p align="center"><i>CERTIFICATION OF ESTABLISHMENT OF CONTINUING EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM</i></p>	
<p><u><i>I, Selina S. Lee, Director, Equal Employment Opportunity Services, am the Principal EEO Director/Official for the Department.</i></u></p> <p>The agency has conducted an annual EEO self-assessment of Section 717 and Section 501 programs, against the essential elements prescribed by EEO MD-715. If an essential element was not fully compliant with the standards of EEO MD-715, a subsequent evaluation was conducted. The Department's EEO Plans for attaining the Essential Elements of a Model EEO Program are included with this Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report.</p> <p>The agency has also analyzed its workforce profiles and conducted barrier analyses aimed at detecting whether any management or personnel policy, procedure, or practice is operating in such a way as to disadvantage any group based on race, national origin, gender, or disability. EEOS' Plans to eliminate identified barriers, as appropriate, are included with this Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report.</p> <p>I certify that proper documentation of this assessment is in place and is being maintained for EEOC review upon request.</p>	
<p>Selina Lee</p>  <p><i>Signature of Principal EEO Director/Official</i></p>	<p>11/30/15</p> <p><i>Date</i></p>
<p>Jason A. Weller</p>  <p><i>Signature of Agency Head or Agency Head Designee</i></p>	<p>11/30/15</p> <p><i>Date</i></p>

**U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Annual EEO Program Status Report
EEOC FORM 715-01, Part G**



Agency Self-Assessment Checklist Measuring Essential Elements




Essential Element A: DEMONSTRATED COMMITMENT FROM AGENCY LEADERSHIP Requires the agency head to issue written policy statements ensuring a workplace free of discriminatory harassment and a commitment to equal employment opportunity.				
 Compliance Indicator	EEO policy statements are up-to-date.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Was the EEO policy Statement issued within 6 - 9 months of the installation of the Agency Head? If no, provide an explanation.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
During the current Agency Head's tenure, has the EEO policy Statement been re-issued annually? If no, provide an explanation.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are new employees provided with a copy of the EEO policy statement during orientation?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
When an employee is promoted into the supervisory ranks, is s/he provided with a copy of the EEO policy statement?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
 Compliance Indicator	EEO policy statements have been communicated to all employees.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Have the heads of subordinate reporting components communicated support of all agency EEO policies through the ranks?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the agency made written materials available to all employees and applicants, informing them of the variety of EEO programs and administrative and judicial remedial procedures available to them?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the agency prominently posted such written materials in all personnel offices, EEO offices, and on the agency's internal website? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(b)(5)]		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
 Compliance Indicator	Agency EEO policy is vigorously enforced by agency management.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Are managers and supervisors evaluated on their commitment to agency EEO policies and principles, including their efforts to:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Resolve problems/disagreements and other conflicts in their respective work environments as they arise?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	




Address employees' concerns, whether perceived or real, and following-up with appropriate action to correct or eliminate tension in the workplace?	X		
Support the agency's EEO program through allocation of mission personnel to participate in community outreach and recruitment programs with private employers, public schools and universities?	X		
Ensure full cooperation of employees under his/her supervision with EEO office officials such as EEO Counselors, EEO Investigators, etc.?	X		
Ensure a workplace that is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment and retaliation?	X		
Ensure that subordinate supervisors have effective managerial, communication and interpersonal skills in order to supervise most effectively in a workplace with diverse employees and avoid disputes arising from ineffective communications?	X		
Ensure the provision of requested religious accommodations when such accommodations do not cause an undue hardship?	X		
Ensure the provision of requested disability accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities when such accommodations do not cause an undue hardship?	X		
Have all employees been informed about what behaviors are inappropriate in the workplace and that this behavior may result in disciplinary actions?	X		
Describe what means were utilized by the agency to inform its workforce about the penalties for unacceptable behavior.			
Have the procedures for requesting reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities been made readily available/accessible to all employees by disseminating such procedures during orientation of new employees and by making such procedures available on the Internet?	X		
Have managers and supervisors been trained on their responsibilities under the procedures for reasonable accommodation?	X		



Essential Element B: INTEGRATION OF EEO INTO THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIC MISSION







Requires that the agency's EEO programs be organized and structured to maintain a workplace that is free from discrimination in any of the agency's policies, procedures or practices and supports the agency's strategic mission.





 Compliance Indicator		Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
	The reporting structure for the EEO Program provides the Principal EEO Official with appropriate authority and resources to effectively carry out a successful EEO Program.			
Is the EEO Director under the direct supervision of the agency head? [see 29 CFR §1614.102(b)(4)]		X		
For subordinate level reporting components, is the EEO Director/Officer under the immediate supervision of the lower level component's head official? (For example, does the Regional EEO Officer report to the Regional Administrator?)				





Are the duties and responsibilities of EEO officials clearly defined?		X		
Do the EEO officials have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out the duties and responsibilities of their positions?		X		
If the agency has 2 nd level reporting components, are there organizational charts that clearly define the reporting structure for EEO programs?		N/A		
If the agency has 2 nd level reporting components, does the agency-wide EEO Director have authority for the EEO programs within the subordinate reporting components?		N/A		
If not, please describe how EEO program authority is delegated to subordinate reporting components.				
 Compliance Indicator	The EEO Director and other EEO professional staff responsible for EEO programs have regular and effective means of informing the agency head and senior management officials of the status of EEO programs and are involved in, and consulted on, management/personnel actions.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Does the EEO Director/Officer have a regular and effective means of informing the agency head and other top management officials of the effectiveness, efficiency and legal compliance of the agency's EEO program?		X		
Following the submission of the immediately preceding FORM 715-01, did the EEO Director/Officer present to the head of the agency and other senior officials the "State of the Agency" briefing covering all components of the EEO report, including an assessment of the performance of the agency in each of the six elements of the Model EEO Program and a report on the progress of the agency in completing its barrier analysis including any barriers it identified, eliminated and/or reduced the impact of?		X		
Are EEO program officials present during agency deliberations prior to decisions regarding recruitment strategies, vacancy projections, succession planning, selections for training/career development opportunities, and other workforce changes?		X		
Does the agency consider whether any group of employees or applicants might be negatively impacted prior to making human resource decisions such as re-organizations and re-alignments?		X		
Are management/personnel policies, procedures and practices examined at regular intervals to assess whether there are hidden impediments to the realization of equality of opportunity for any group(s) of employees or applicants? [see 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102(b)(3)]		X		
Is the EEO Director included in the agency's strategic planning, especially the agency's human capital plan, regarding succession planning, training, etc., to ensure that EEO concerns are integrated into the agency's strategic mission?		X		
 Compliance Indicator	The agency has committed sufficient	Measure has been met		For all unmet





	human resources and budget allocations to its EEO programs to ensure successful operation.	Yes	No	measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures				
Does the EEO Director have the authority and funding to ensure implementation of agency EEO action plans to improve EEO program efficiency and/or eliminate identified barriers to the realization of equality of opportunity?		X		
Are sufficient personnel resources allocated to the EEO Program to ensure that the agency self-assessments and self-analyses prescribed by EEO MD-715 are conducted annually and maintained in order to achieve an effective complaint processing system?		X		
Are statutory/regulatory EEO-related Special Emphasis Programs sufficiently staffed?		X		
Federal Women's Program - 5 U.S.C. 7201; 38 U.S.C. 4214; Title 5 CFR, Subpart B, 720.204		X		
Hispanic Employment Program - Title 5 CFR, Subpart B, 720.204		X		
People With Disabilities Program Manager; Selective Placement Program for Individuals With Disabilities - Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act; Title 5 U.S.C. Subpart B, Chapter 31, Subchapter I-3102; 5 CFR 213.3102(t) and (u); 5 CFR 315.709		X		
Are other agency special emphasis programs monitored by the EEO Office for coordination and compliance with EEO guidelines and principles, such as FEORP - 5 CFR 720; Veterans Employment Programs; and Black/African American; American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian American/Pacific Islander programs?		X		
 Compliance Indicator	The agency has committed a sufficient percentage of its budget to support the success of its EEO Programs.	Measure has been met Yes No		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures				









Are there sufficient resources to enable the agency to conduct a thorough barrier analysis of its workforce, including the provision of adequate data collection and tracking systems?		X		
Is there a sufficient budget allocation for all employees to utilize all EEO programs, when desired, including the complaint processing program, ADR, subordinate level reporting components, and making a request for reasonable accommodation?		X		
Has funding been secured for publication and distribution of EEO materials (e.g. harassment policies, EEO posters, reasonable accommodations procedures, etc.)?		X		
Is there a central fund or other mechanism for funding the supplies, equipment and services necessary to provide disability accommodations?		X		
Does the agency fund major renovation projects to ensure timely compliance with Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards?		X		
Is the EEO Program allocated with sufficient resources to train all employees on EEO Programs, including administrative and judicial remedial procedures available to employees?		X		
Is there sufficient funding to ensure the prominent posting of written materials in all personnel and EEO offices? [see 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102(b)(5)]		X		
Is there sufficient funding to ensure that all employees have access to this training and information?		X		
Is there sufficient funding to provide all managers and supervisors with training and periodic updates on their EEO responsibilities:		X		
for ensuring a workplace that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment and retaliation?		X		
for providing religious accommodations?		X		
for providing disability accommodations in accordance with the agency's written procedures?		X		
in the EEO discrimination complaint process?		X		
to participate in ADR?		X		
<p align="center">Essential Element C: MANAGEMENT AND PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY</p> <p>This element requires the Agency Head to hold all managers, supervisors, and EEO Officials responsible for the effective implementation of the agency's EEO Program and Plan.</p>				
 Compliance Indicator	EEO program officials advise and provide appropriate assistance to managers/supervisors about the status of EEO programs within each manager's or supervisor's area or responsibility.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Are regular (monthly/quarterly/semi-annually) EEO updates provided to management/supervisory officials by EEO program officials?		X		
Do EEO program officials coordinate the development and implementation of EEO Plans with all appropriate agency managers to include Agency Counsel, Human Resource Officials, Finance, and the Chief information Officer?		X		

 Compliance Indicator	The Human Resources Director and the EEO Director meet regularly to assess whether personnel programs, policies, and procedures are in conformity with instructions contained in EEOC management directives. [see 29 CFR § 1614.102(b)(3)]	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
	Have timetables or schedules been established for the agency to review its Merit Promotion Program Policy and Procedures for systemic barriers that may be impeding full participation in promotion opportunities by all groups?	X		
	Have timetables or schedules been established for the agency to review its Employee Recognition Awards Program and Procedures for systemic barriers that may be impeding full participation in the program by all groups?	X		
	Have timetables or schedules been established for the agency to review its Employee Development/Training Programs for systemic barriers that may be impeding full participation in training opportunities by all groups?	X		
 Compliance Indicator	When findings of discrimination are made, the agency explores whether or not disciplinary actions should be taken.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
	Does the agency have a disciplinary policy and/or a table of penalties that covers employees found to have committed discrimination?	X		
	Have all employees, supervisors, and managers been informed as to the penalties for perpetrating discriminatory behavior or for taking personnel actions based upon a prohibited basis?	X		
	Has the agency, when appropriate, disciplined or sanctioned managers/supervisors or employees found to have discriminated over the past two years?	X		
If so, cite the number found to have discriminated and list penalty /disciplinary action for each type of violation.				
	Does the agency promptly (within the established time frame) comply with EEOC, Merit Systems Protection Board, Federal Labor Relations Authority, labor arbitrators, and District Court orders?	X		
	Does the agency review disability accommodation decisions/actions to ensure compliance with its written procedures and analyze the information tracked for trends, problems, etc.?	X		
Essential Element D: PROACTIVE PREVENTION Requires that the agency head makes early efforts to prevent discriminatory actions and eliminate barriers to equal employment opportunity in the workplace.				
 Compliance Indicator	Analyses to identify and remove unnecessary barriers to employment are conducted throughout the year.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
	Do senior managers meet with and assist the EEO Director and/or other EEO Program Officials in the identification of barriers that may be impeding the realization of equal employment opportunity?	X		

When barriers are identified, do senior managers develop and implement, with the assistance of the agency EEO office, agency EEO Action Plans to eliminate said barriers?		X		
Do senior managers successfully implement EEO Action Plans and incorporate the EEO Action Plan Objectives into agency strategic plans?		X		
Are trend analyses of workforce profiles conducted by race, national origin, sex and disability?		X		
Are trend analyses of the workforce's major occupations conducted by race, national origin, sex and disability?		X		
Are trends analyses of the workforce's grade level distribution conducted by race, national origin, sex and disability?		X		
Are trend analyses of the workforce's compensation and reward system conducted by race, national origin, sex and disability?		X		
Are trend analyses of the effects of management/personnel policies, procedures and practices conducted by race, national origin, sex and disability?		X		
 Compliance Indicator	The use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is encouraged by senior management.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Are all employees encouraged to use ADR?		X		
Is the participation of supervisors and managers in the ADR process required?		X		
<p align="center">Essential Element E: EFFICIENCY</p> <p align="center">Requires that the agency head ensure that there are effective systems in place for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the agency's EEO Programs as well as an efficient and fair dispute resolution process.</p>				
 Compliance Indicator	The agency has sufficient staffing, funding, and authority to achieve the elimination of identified barriers.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Does the EEO Office employ personnel with adequate training and experience to conduct the analyses required by MD-715 and these instructions?		X		
Has the agency implemented adequate data collection and analysis systems to permit tracking of the information as required by MD-715 and these instructions?		X		
Have sufficient resources been provided to conduct effective audits of field facilities' efforts to achieve a model EEO program and eliminate discrimination under Title VII and the Rehabilitation Act?		X		
Is there a designated agency official or other mechanism in place to coordinate or assist with processing requests for disability accommodations in all major components of the agency?		X		
Are 90% of accommodation requests processed within the time frame set forth in the agency procedures for reasonable accommodation?		X		

 Compliance Indicator	The agency has an effective complaint tracking and monitoring system in place to increase the effectiveness of the agency's EEO Programs.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Does the agency use a complaint tracking and monitoring system that delineates the location and status of complaints and the length of time elapsed at each stage of the agency's complaint resolution process?		X		
Does the agency's tracking system identify the issues and bases for the complaints, the aggrieved individuals/complainants, the involved management officials and other information to analyze complaint activity and trends?		X		
Does the agency hold contractors accountable for delays in counseling and investigation processing times?		X		
If yes, briefly describe how: Via interagency agreement and NRCS performance plan for supervisors and managers				
Does the agency monitor and ensure that new investigators and counselors, including contract and collateral duty investigators, receive the 32 hours of training required in accordance with EEO Management Directive MD-110?		X		
Does the agency monitor and ensure that experienced counselors and investigators, including contract and collateral duty investigators, receive the 8 hours of refresher training required on an annual basis in accordance with EEO Management Directive MD-110?		X		
 Compliance Indicator	The agency has sufficient staffing, funding and authority to comply with the time frames in accordance with the EEOC (29 C.F.R. Part 1614) regulations for processing EEO complaints of employment discrimination.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Are benchmarks in place that compare the agency's discrimination complaint processes with 29 C.F.R. Part 1614?		X		
Does the agency provide timely EEO counseling within 30 days of the initial request or within an agreed upon extension in writing, up to 60 days?		X		
Does the agency provide an aggrieved person with written notification of his/her rights and responsibilities in the EEO process in a timely fashion?		X		
Does the agency complete the investigations within the applicable prescribed time frame?			X	About 80% timely. The USDA, OASCR provides reimbursable service in processing all NRCS EEO investigations.
When a complainant requests a final agency decision, does the agency issue the decision within 60 days of the request?			X	About 20% timely. The USDA, OASCR is responsible for the issuance of agency-wide FADs.
When a complainant requests a hearing, does the agency immediately, upon receipt of the request from the EEOC AJ, forward the investigative file to the EEOC Hearing Office?		X		
When a settlement agreement is entered into, does the agency timely complete all obligations provided for in such agreements?		X		

Does the agency ensure timely compliance with EEOC AJ decisions that are not the subject of an appeal by the agency?		X		
 Compliance Indicator	There is an efficient and fair dispute resolution process and effective systems for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the agency's EEO complaint processing program.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
In accordance with 29 C.F.R. §1614.102(b), has the agency established an ADR Program for the pre-complaint and formal complaint stages of the EEO process?		X		
Does the agency require all managers and supervisors to receive ADR training in accordance with EEOC (29 C.F.R. Part 1614) regulations, which emphasize the federal government's interest in encouraging mutual resolution of disputes and the benefits associated with utilizing ADR?		X		
After the agency has offered ADR and the complainant has elected to participate in ADR, are the managers required to participate?		X		
Does the responsible management official directly involved in the dispute have settlement authority?			X	Per MD 110, Chapter 3, Section VI(a)9, the settlement authority is reserved for the Resolving Official and not the responsible management official. USDA assigns the RMO's immediate supervisor as the RO.
 Compliance Indicator	The agency has effective systems in place for maintaining and evaluating the impact and effectiveness of its EEO programs.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Does the agency have a system of management controls in place to ensure the timely, accurate, complete and consistent reporting of EEO complaint data to the EEOC?		X		
Does the agency provide reasonable resources for the EEO complaint process to ensure efficient and successful operation in accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102(a)(1)?		X		
Does the agency's EEO office have management controls in place to monitor and ensure that the data received from Human Resources is accurate, timely received, and contains all the required data elements for submitting annual reports to the EEOC?		X		
Do the agency's EEO programs address all of the laws enforced by the EEOC?		X		
Does the agency identify and monitor significant trends in complaint processing to determine whether the agency is meeting its obligations under both Title VII and the Rehabilitation Act?		X		
Does the agency track recruitment efforts and analyze efforts to identify potential barriers in accordance with MD-715 standards?			X	NCRS did not provide an adequate data collection for applicant pools needed to permit tracking of the information required by MD-715 as shown on Tables A7 and A9.
Does the agency consult with other agencies of similar size on the effectiveness of their EEO programs to identify best practices and share ideas?		X		

 Compliance Indicator	The agency ensures that the investigation and adjudication functions of its complaint resolution process are separate from its legal defense arm of agency and other offices with conflicting or competing interests.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Are legal sufficiency reviews of EEO matters handled by a functional unit that is separate and apart from the unit that handles agency representation in EEO complaints?		X		
Does the agency discrimination complaint process ensure a neutral adjudication function?		X		
If applicable, are processing time frames incorporated into the legal counsel's sufficiency review for timely processing of complaints?		X		
<p align="center">Essential Element F: RESPONSIVENESS AND LEGAL COMPLIANCE</p> <p align="center">This element requires that federal agencies be in full compliance with EEO statutes and EEOC regulations, policy guidance, and other written instructions.</p>				
 Compliance Indicator	Agency personnel are accountable for timely compliance with orders issued by EEOC Administrative Judges.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Does the agency have a system of management control to ensure that agency officials timely comply with any orders or directives issued by an EEOC Administrative Judges?		X		
 Compliance Indicator	The agency's system of management controls ensures that the agency timely completes all ordered corrective action and submits its compliance reports to EEOC within 30 days of such completion.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Does the agency have control over the payroll processing function of the agency? If Yes, answer the two questions below.		X		
Are there steps in place to guarantee responsive, timely, and predictable processing of ordered monetary relief?		X		
Are procedures in place to promptly process other forms of ordered relief?		X		
 Compliance Indicator	Agency personnel are accountable for the timely completion of actions required to comply with orders of EEOC.	Measure has been met		For all unmet measures, provide a brief explanation in the space below or complete and attach an EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H to the agency's status report
 Measures		Yes	No	
Is compliance with EEOC orders encompassed in the performance standards of any agency employees?		X		
If so, please identify the employees by title in the comments section, and state how performance is measured.				
Is the unit charged with the responsibility of complying with EEOC orders located in the EEO office?		X		

If not, please identify the unit in which it is located, the number of employees in the unit, and their grade levels in the comments section.			
Have the involved employees received any formal training in EEO compliance?	X		
Does the agency promptly provide to the EEOC the following documentation for completing compliance:	X		
Attorney Fees: Copy of check issued for attorney fees and/or a narrative statement by an appropriate agency official and/or an agency payment order delineating the dollar amount of attorney fees paid;	X		
Awards: A narrative statement by an appropriate agency official stating the dollar amount and the criteria used to calculate the award;	X		
Back Pay and Interest: Computer printouts or payroll documents outlining gross back pay and interest, copies of any checks issued, and narrative statements by an appropriate agency official total monies paid;	X		
Compensatory Damages: The final agency decision and evidence of payment, if made;	X		
Training: Attendance roster at training session(s) or a narrative statement by an appropriate agency official confirming that specific persons or groups of persons attended training on a certain date;	X		
Personnel Actions (e.g., Reinstatement, Promotion, Hiring, Reassignment): Copies of SF-50s;	X		
Posting of Notice of Violation: Original signed and dated notice reflecting the dates that the notice was posted. A copy of the notice will suffice if the original is not available;	X		
Supplemental Investigation: 1. Copy of letter to complainant acknowledging receipt from EEOC of remanded case. 2. Copy of letter to complainant for when the Report of Investigation was transmitted (not the ROI itself unless specified). 3. Copy of request for a hearing (complainant's request letter or agency's transmittal letter);	X		
Final Agency Decision (FAD): FAD or copy of the complainant's request for a hearing;	X		
Restoration of Leave: Printout or statement identifying the amount of leave restored, if applicable. If not, an explanation or statement;	X		
Civil Actions: A complete copy of the civil action complaint demonstrating the same issues raised as in the compliance matter;	X		
Settlement Agreements: Signed and dated agreement with specific dollar amounts, if applicable. Also, if appropriate, documentation of relief should be provided?	X		

Footnotes:

1. See 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102.

2. When an agency makes modifications to its procedures, the procedures must be resubmitted to the Commission. See *EEOC Policy Guidance on Executive Order 13164: Establishing Procedures to Facilitate the Provision of Reasonable Accommodation* (10/20/00) Requests.

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service EEO Plan For Attaining the Essential Elements of A Model EEO Program	
NRCS		FY 2015
Essential Element E: Efficiency		
Compliance Measures	Does the agency provide timely EEO investigation and timely issuance of final agency decision within the required timeframe set forth by the EEO Commission?	
STATEMENT of MODEL PROGRAM ESSENTIAL ELEMENT DEFICIENCY:	In FY 2015, about 80% of EEO investigations and 20% of FADs were completed in a timely manner.	
OBJECTIVE:	Complete at least 90% of investigations and FADs issued in a timely manner.	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:	USDA, OASCR Staff; NRCS, CRD Staff	
DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:	October 01, 2014	
TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	September 30, 2016	
PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:		TARGET DATE (Must be specific)
Monitored requests for information to ensure that all requests are responded within the required timeframes and ensured that the date of the completed action is updated in the database tracking system within 2-3 days.		Completed
Developed a tracking system to evaluate the progress of EEO investigations.		Completed
Meet with OASCR Liaisons to obtain updates and work to ensure that agency witnesses cooperate with investigators in timely submitting/maintaining relevant documentation and statements for the record.		September 2016
Provide training to responsible management officials and other witnesses regarding the investigation process at the counseling stage to ensure their understanding of their obligation to cooperate during the EEO complaint process.		September 30, 2016

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART H		U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service EEO Plan For Attaining the Essential Elements of A Model EEO Program	
NRCS		FY 2015	
Essential Element E: Efficiency			
Compliance Measures	Has the agency implemented an adequate data collection and analysis system for applicant pools, which permits tracking of the information required by MD-715 and these instructions?		
STATEMENT of MODEL PROGRAM ESSENTIAL ELEMENT DEFICIENCY:	In FY 2014, NRCS did not have the capability to collect applicant pool data to allow the NSEPMs and CRD staff to conduct an application pool/barrier analysis.		
OBJECTIVE:	Modify the applicant tracking system for applicant pools to produce sufficient data tables for barrier analysis purpose as required by MD-715 guidance. .		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:	MD 715 Program Managers, CRD Director of Human Resources Director, Talent Management National Finance Center (NFC) IT Team, USDA National SEP Managers		
DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:	January 3, 2015		
TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	September 30, 2016		
PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:			TARGET DATE (Must be specific)
CRD has met with HR/NFC to seek technical assistance in updating the race and national origin (RNO) and disability codes in the recruitment and hiring database system. This will include the capability to track applicants, including internal candidates for competitive promotions and senior grade level positions by race, sex, national origin, date of birth, and disability status.			Completed July 2015
Research the database for applicant pool data and work with the IT/HR team to project the applicant pool data/			September 30, 2016

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART I	<p align="center"><i>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service</i> EEO PLAN TO ELIMINATE IDENTIFIED BARRIER</p>	
Barrier #1: Participation rate of Hispanics in NRCS remains below the National CLF.		
<p>STATEMENT of CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.</p> <p>How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?</p>	<p>The participation rate for Hispanic employees decreased from 569 in FY 2014 to 532 in FY 2015. There is also a decrease in the participation rate for Hispanic employees from 5.39% in FY 2014 to 5.38% in FY 2015. However, it remained significantly below the NCLF of 9.96%.</p> <p>With respect to gains and losses, there was a positive trend in the hiring rate for Hispanic males and females from 5.39% in FY 2014 (11 males and 8 females) to 7.38% (33 males and 17 females) in FY 2015. The separation rate for Hispanics increased slightly from 4.90% (27 males and 8 females) in FY 2014 to 5.41% (25 males and 13 females) in FY 2015.</p>	
<p>BARRIER ANALYSIS:</p> <p>Provide a description of the steps taken and data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.</p>	<p>With respect to the Senior Executive Service (SES) grade level, Hispanics comprised 8.33% which was higher than their corresponding participation rates of 5.12%. There were two SES Hispanic males and no SES Hispanic females in the permanent workforce. The participation rate of Hispanics at the Executive/Senior leadership positions was well-represented at 7.94%, which was significantly higher than their corresponding participation rate of 5.12%.</p> <p>Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant Occupation CLF for Hispanic males and females (see Appendix H, Table A6). Specifically, the participation rate of Hispanic males are below their relevant occupational CLF in the following major or mission critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (2.54 v. CLF of 4.20%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (3.47% v. CLF of 8.10%); Human Resource Management - 0201 (0% v. CLF 5.00%); Contracting - 1102 (0% v. CLF of 2.20%); Cartography - 1370 (3.77% v. CLF of 6.20%), Environmental Engineering - 0819 (0% v. 3.5%); and IT Management - 2210 (5.88% v. CLF 6.10%).</p> <p>Participation rates of Hispanic females are below their respective occupational CLF in the following mission critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (1.05% v. CLF of 7.90%); General Biological Science - 0401 (1.48% v. CLF 2.60%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (0.25% v. CLF of 2.10%); Management Analyst - 0343 (0.78% v. CLF of 8.10%); Secretary - 0318 (3.77% v. CLF of 9.30%); Geology - 1350 (0% v. CLF 1.70%); Contracting - 1102 (4.62% v. CLF of 5.10%); IT Management - 2210 (0% v. CLF of 2.30%); and Environmental Engineering - 0819 (0% v. CLF of 1.10%).</p>	
<p>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.</p>	<p>The National HEP Manager conducted a barrier analysis and provided a summary of barrier and program updates. See Appendix D for details.</p>	

OBJECTIVE: State the alternative or revised agency policy, procedure or practice to be implemented to correct the undesired condition.	To increase the hiring of qualified Hispanic applicants by expanding the applicant pool for Hispanics in major occupations with NRCS.	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:	National Hispanic Employment Program Manager Director, Diversity and Recruitment Branch (formerly, Talent Management) Deputy Chief for Management HR Director MD 715 Program Managers, CRD	
DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:	October 1, 2014	
TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	September 30, 2016	
PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	TARGET DATE	
Convened a HEPM meeting to engage senior leaders, the HR recruitment team, and State Conservationists to work on the national recruitment plan and to develop strategies dedicated to the Hispanic hiring initiatives.	Completed	
Establish a support system that encourages Hispanics to become interested in public service and that teaches them how to apply for jobs in government agencies.	July 2016	
Continue collaborative partnership activities with the Hispanic colleges and institutions to market the job application process with the focus to increase the Hispanic outreach efforts, and to make Hispanic applicants aware of job availability in the Department.	August 2016	
Develop and implement a series of career development initiatives targeted at current Department Hispanic employees, including mentorship and rotational assignments.	September 2016	
Report of Accomplishments and Modifications of Objective <p>The National Hispanic Employment Program Manager (NHEPM) is the lead responsible person for developing strategies and solutions that will promote management's commitment to equal opportunity in the work place. The HEPM acts on a number of fronts, including targeted recruitment, addressing identified barriers, diversity best practices, career development, cultural awareness, and promoting workforce diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>The Agency provided a productive summer internship experience for two students from the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC)/MARYLAND MULTICULTURAL YOUTH CENTERS Summer Youth Connect Internship Program. They worked in the Human Resources and Land Easements Division, respectively. Students were able to participate in USDA-sponsored activities such as Financial Literacy Class, Flash Mentoring and Ethics Training.</p> <p>The six week program consisted of one week of job readiness instruction and five weeks of work experience which contributed to the professional development of youth ages 16-21. The Program ran from Monday, June 29 to Friday, August 7, 2015.</p> <p>As of June 30, 2015, Hispanic students account for 9% of all student hires (23 of 240). There were 18 Pathways students, 3 HACU, and 2 SYEP.</p> <p><u>National HEPM</u></p>		

- The Hispanic Recruitment Initiative/strategic plan was completed. In FY 14, NHEPM expanded listed activities and began the implementation phase. NRCS leadership set aside first year funding to begin addressing and implementing actions highlighted on the Strategic Plan. Funding will support the 2015 Latinos in Ag Annual Conference, and establish a collaborative agreement with Texas A&M University, Kingsville and New Mexico State University with the focus of creating a developmental program that teaches Hispanic students the application process and provides a summer internship with NRCS.
- Completed additional partnership agreements with other Hispanic organizations to continue collaborative efforts in recruiting, developing and supporting Hispanics in Government. These agreements include Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) internship program, sponsoring the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science annual conference, and supporting the annual student training institutes as part of the National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC).
- Developed a comprehensive series of training workshop modules to use in conducting Pathways Program workshops targeting key HSIs, and educating Hispanic students and faculty on the internship program and application requirements. Conducted 6 Pathways workshops in FY 14 with over 200 students who participated in these workshops. More workshops planned for FY 15.
- Collaborated with the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees to host a one-day HEPM Training workshop. The workshop was scheduled for October 22, 2015, in Grapevine, TX.

See Appendix D for HEP accomplishments, initiatives and updates.

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART I	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service EEO PLAN TO ELIMINATE IDENTIFIED BARRIER	
Barrier #2: Participation rate of Blacks in NRCS remains below the National CLF.		
<p>STATEMENT of CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.</p> <p>How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?</p>	<p>With respect to the Black permanent workforce, the number of Black employees increased slightly from 854 in FY 2014, to 860 in FY 2015. Despite the increase in number, the participation rate for Black employees shows a slight increase from 8.23% in FY 2014, to 8.27% in FY 2015, which was below the NCLF of 12.02%.</p> <p>The hiring rate for Black males and females changed from 12.47% in FY 2014 (27 males and 17 females), to 10.34% (37 males and 33 females) in FY 2015. Although the percentage rate decreased there was an increase in the number of Blacks participating in the workforce. However, the separation rate for Blacks increased from 6.86% (26 males and 23 females) in FY 2014 to 8.82% (40 males and 22 females) in FY 2015.</p> <p>With respect to the SES grade level, there were six Black SES employees (5 males and one female) in the permanent workforce. The participation rate of Blacks at the SES level was 27.28%, which was significantly higher than their corresponding participation rate of 8.23%.</p>	
<p>BARRIER ANALYSIS:</p> <p>Provide a description of the steps taken and the data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.</p>	<p>Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant occupation CLF for Black men and Black women (see Appendix H, Table A6). Specifically, the participation rates of Black males are below their respective occupational CLF in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (2.80% v. CLF of 3.80%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (3.22% v. CLF of 7.20%); Rangeland Management - 0454 (0.00% v. CFL of 1.80%); Agricultural Engineer - 0890 (1.71% v. CLF of 3.90%); Budget Analyst - 0560 (1.96% v. CLF of 4.00%); Cartography - 1370 (0.00% v. CLF of 4.00%); IT Management - 2210 (0.00% v. CLF 7.00%); Geology - 1350 (0.00% v. CLF 2.00%); and Environmental Engineer - 0819 (0.00% v. CLF of 5.10%).</p> <p>Participation rates of Black females are below their respective occupational CLF in following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician – 0458 (0.70% v. CLF of 2.80%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (0.25% v. CLF of 2.30%); Geology - 1350 (0.00% v. CLF of 1.70%) and Environmental Engineering - 0819 (0.00% v. CLF of 1.9%).</p> <p>A summary of the national BEP efforts to eliminate the potential barriers is provided in Appendix D.</p>	
<p>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.</p>	<p>See Appendix D for the BEP Manager's updates on actions taken to address the barrier analysis.</p>	
<p>OBJECTIVE:</p>	<p>To increase the hiring of qualified Black within NRCS by expanding the applicant pool for major occupations within NRCS.</p>	

State the alternative or revised agency policy, procedure or practice to be implemented to correct the undesired condition.		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:	BEP Manager Diversity and Recruitment Branch (formerly, Talent Management) Deputy Chief for Management HR Director MD 715 Program Manager, CRD	
DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:	October 1, 2014	
TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	September 30, 2015	
PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	TARGET DATE (Must Be Specific)	
Engaged BEP members, senior leaders, human resource staff, and hiring officials to discuss process improvement and determine whether the recruitment and selection process should be refined internally.	Completed March 2015	
Host mentoring and "brown bag" sessions with Black employees to discuss their advancement experience.	September 2016	
Evaluate policies and practices and observe how qualified applicants are selected into senior grade level positions and assess whether the agency's selection process has any deficiencies or potential barriers.	December 2016	
<p>Report of Accomplishments and Modifications of Objective</p> <p>NRCS participated in the Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute in November of FY15. The Agency recruited 6 Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute interns on site at various NRCS locations.</p> <p>The Department conducted an Onsite application event for Mission Critical Pathways Intern and Recent Graduate Positions during MANRRS conference in March 2015 and accepted applications from conference attendees and the general public. Hosted career-related sessions for attendees. NRCS is a Gold Sponsor for the event. As a part of the sponsorship, the Agency managed a booth at the career fair and facilitated workshops.</p> <p>NRCS sponsored an Onsite application event for Mission Critical Pathways Intern and Recent Graduate Positions at NAFEO Career Development Conference in April 2015. Also, the Agency accepted applications from conference attendees and the general public. NRCS sponsored the hosted the conference for 150 HBCU college. Presentations were given on NRCS careers; preparing for Federal careers; preparing resumes; and interviewing. Students had opportunities to network with the NRCS State Conservationists.</p> <p>Black/African Americans make up 16% of student hires (39 out of 240); 33 Pathways, 24 1890s and one SYEP, and 5 Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute program interns as of June 30, 2015.</p> <p>NRCS participated in the MANRRS Regional Clusters in September and October of FY15 (held in Dallas, Atlanta and Las Vegas). Presented workshops and managed a career booth.</p> <p>See Appendix D for details on the BEP accomplishments, initiatives and updates.</p>		

Barrier #3: Participation rate of Asian Americans (AA) in NRCS remains below the National CLF.

**STATEMENT of CONDITION
THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A
POTENTIAL BARRIER:**

Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.

How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?

There were a total of 141 AA employees in the permanent workforce (82 males and 59 females) in FY 2015. The number of AA employees decreased from 146 in FY 2014 to 141 in FY 2015. The participation rate for AA employees shows a slight decrease of 0.05% from 1.41% in FY 2014 to 1.36% in FY 2015.

With respect to gains and losses, there was a slight decrease in the hiring rate for AA from 1.70% in FY 2014 (3 males and 3 females) to 1.03% (4 males and 3 females) in FY 2015, which was below their respective NCLFs of 3.9%. The separation rate for AA decreased from 1.82% (9 males and 4 females) in FY 2014, to 1.85% (6 males and 7 females) in FY 2015.

With respect to the SES level, there was no AA represented. The participation rates of AA males and females at the SES level are absent, which remain below their corresponding rates of 1.36%.

With respect to Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NH/PI), their participation rate was 0.41% in the permanent workforce, which was well above the NCLF of 0.14%. There were a total of 43 employees identified as NHPI in the permanent workforce.

BARRIER ANALYSIS:

Provide a description of the steps taken and the data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.

Several occupations within NRCS fall below their relevant Occupation CLF for AA males and AA females (see Appendix H, Table A6). Specifically, the participation rates of AA males are below their respective occupational CLF in the following major/mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation - 0457 (0.55% v. CLF of 0.90%); Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (0.17% v. CLF of 6.80%); Soil Science - 0470 (0.98% v. CLF of 4.80%); General Biological Science - 0401 (0.37% v. CLF of 5.20%); Civil Engineering - 0810 (2.75% v. CLF 8.90%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (0.50% v. CLF of 5.7%); Miscellaneous Clerk - 0303 (0.00% v. CLF of 0.90%); Rangeland Management - 0454 (0.36% v. CFL of 0.90%); Agricultural Engineering - 0890 (2.14% v. CLF 10.20%); Agronomy - 0471 (0.96% v. CLF of 4.80%); Human Resource Management - 0201 (1.16% v. CLF of 2.2%); Budget Analyst - 0560 (0.00% v. CLF of 2.80%); Cartography - 1370 (3.77% v. CLF of 2.80%); and Geology - 1350 (0.00% v. 2.80%).

Participation rates of AA females are below their respective occupational CLFs in the following major mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation - 0457 (0.34% v. CLF of 0.70%); Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (0.09% v. CLF of 7.90%); Soil Science - 0470 (0.16% v. CLF of 2.40%); General Biological Science - 0401 (0.92 v. CLF of 6.00%); Civil Engineering - 0810 (0.21% v. CLF of 1.80%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (0.00% v. CLF of 2.30%); Miscellaneous Clerk - 0303 (0.00% v. CLF of 0.70%); Agricultural Engineer - 0890 (0.85% v. CLF of 3.60%); Management Analyst - 0343 (1.55% v. CLF of 2.60%); Secretary - 0318 (0.94% v. CLF of 2.30%); Human Resource Management - 0201 (2.33% v. CLF of 2.7%); Contracting - 1102 (0.00% v. CLF of 4.20%); Agronomy - 0471 (0.96% v. CLF 2.40%); Geology - 1350 (0.00% v. CLF 1.00%); and Environmental Engineering - 0819 (0.00% v. CLF of 2.6%).

A summary of the Asian American/Pacific Islander Emphasis Program efforts to eliminate the potential barriers is provided in Appendix D.

<p>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.</p>	<p>The overall Asian participation rates remain below the NCLF as well as the relevant occupational CLFs.</p>	
<p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>State the alternative or revised agency policy, procedure or practice to be implemented to correct the undesired condition.</p>	<p>To increase the hiring of qualified Asians within NRCS by expanding the applicant pool for major occupations within NRCS.</p>	
<p>RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:</p>	<p>National AAPI Manager Diversity and Recruitment Branch (formerly, Talent Management) Deputy Chief for Management HR Director MD 715 Program Manager, CRD</p>	
<p>DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:</p>	<p>October 1, 2014</p>	
<p>TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:</p>	<p>September 30, 2016</p>	
<p>PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:</p>	<p>TARGET DATE (Must Be Specific)</p>	
<p>Engaged AA SEP members, senior leaders, human resource staff, and hiring officials to address the low participation rate of AA groups and develop a strategy to expand the applicant pool of AA for job vacancies in major occupations.</p>	<p>Completed March 2015</p>	
<p>Establish a support system that encourages Asian candidates to become interested in public service and that teaches them how to apply for jobs in government agencies.</p>	<p>December 2015</p>	
<p>Report of Accomplishments and Modifications of Objective</p> <p>The National Asian American/Pacific Islander (AA/PI) Employment Program Manager is the lead responsible person for developing strategies and solutions that will promote management's commitment to equal opportunity in the work place. The AA SEPM acts on a number of fronts, including targeted recruitment, addressing identified barriers, diversity best practices, career development, cultural awareness, and promoting workforce diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>In addition, the National AA/PI Manager has established productive relationships acquiring active support and engagement with Department leaders from the White House Initiative on AA/PI as well as building professional contacts with the local employee organizations. The goal is to attract AAPI interns to career paths in Federal service through various student programs, including the Federal Pathways and the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Programs.</p> <p>NRCS participated in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce Career Fair in New York City, on August 9, 2015.</p> <p>NRCS Asian American/Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Activities in support of the White House Initiative:</p> <p>NRCS has been working and collaborating effectively with non-profit community-based organizations such as National Hmong American Farmers, Inc.; Center for New Americans; Hmong Farmers Association; and the Golden Valley Producers. The NRCS work and collaboration efforts with these groups have helped us gain the Hmong American farming community's trust and as a result increase their level participation in USDA programs.</p>		

- In Fiscal Year 2015, NRCS partnered with NIFA, AMS and RD to fund the AAPI Resource Center at Michigan State University. This Center is part of Michigan State's Extension Program. NRCS contributed \$100,000 to this partnership. The Center will address repeated concerns of providing language access, education and technical assistance to the AAPI Communities. The Center is responsive to the Civil Rights legislation for language access, and to the WHIAAPI language access goal. Due to the limited English proficiency, the agencies determined a shared partnership to address the AAPI needs would be best served. The Center is tasked to start converting the USDA Hmong materials into audio given the low literacy rate of the Hmong population and their inability to read the translated materials.
- NRCS developed a National 2014 Farm Bill Outreach Strategy to ensure all historically underserved communities will have access and understand the provisions of the Farm Bill. Through this Strategy NRCS, uses all forms of written, social media, and traditional media to communicate with our historically underserved customers. NRCS has produced numerous pamphlets, documents, press releases, memorandums, and displays in a variety of languages. Twenty State offices have published NRCS information in non-English languages. The most common language is Spanish, but materials are translated into Russian, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Japanese, Portuguese, and some Tribal languages. NRCS's social media presence includes YouTube videos produced in Spanish and Korean, Twitter posts in Spanish, and NRCS Facebook messages in other languages.
- To increase outreach to the AAPI communities, NRCS entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the Rural Coalition, a conservation partner since 2005. The Rural Coalition is an alliance of over 90 culturally diverse community based groups in the United States and Mexico who collaborate to advance social justice and sustainable development in rural areas. The Agreement allowed NRCS and the Rural Coalition to coordinate efforts related to sustainable natural resource management for the AAPI community. This partnership introduced new agricultural technologies, created trust, comprehensive and replicable systems of landowner outreach and support and introduced the many NRCS technical and financial assistance programs to the AAPI community.

NRCS Nat'l SEPMS participated in planning the Department-wide AAPI Heritage Month observance. The educational observance is recorded and made available to all NRCS employees to view. Additionally, the States hosted similar educational observances and events during the month of May 2015.

On March 30 - April 4, 2015, the AA/PI teaching cadre met to develop a "training/workshop" to educate NRCS employees about the AA/PI culture and effectively work with AA/PI cooperators in the local community. The course is being developed under the direction of National Employee Development Center (NEDC). The course will be rolled out through NEDC. First step is to pilot the course. Consideration is being given to conduct the pilot at the NRCS AAPI Employee Resources Group Training Program being held in Aug. 2015 but this is not confirmed.

See Appendix D for details on the AA accomplishments, initiatives and updates.

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART I	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service EEO PLAN TO ELIMINATE IDENTIFIED BARRIER	
Barrier #4: Participation rate of Women in NRCS remains below the National CLF.		
<p>STATEMENT of CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.</p> <p>How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?</p>	<p>In FY 2015, NRCS females represented 35.99% of the Agency's permanent workforce, which has remained below the NCLF of 48.14%. The largest female groups were: White females (28.16%) and Black females (3.75%).</p> <p>With respect to the senior grade levels, participation rates for Hispanic females, AA females, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander females, American Indian/Native American females in the SES level and Two+ Races Women remain absent, i.e., their participation rates were below their corresponding participation rates in the permanent workforce.</p>	
<p>BARRIER ANALYSIS:</p> <p>Provide a description of the steps taken and the data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.</p>	<p>Participation rates of NRCS females are below their respective occupational CLFs in the following major mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation Technician - 0458 (24.06% v. CLF of 55.00%); Soil Science - 0470 (20.95% v. CLF of 26.40%); General Biological Science - 0401 (31.79% v. CLF of 47.70%); Engineer Technician - 0802 (9.90 v. CLF of 20.50%); Management Analyst - 0343 (56.59% v. CLF of 75.00%); and Geology - 1350 (22.22% v. CLF of 31.0%).</p> <p>A summary of the Federal Women's Program efforts to eliminate the potential barriers for women is provided in Appendix D.</p>	
<p>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.</p>	<p>The overall women participation rate remains below the NCLF.</p>	
<p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>State the alternative or revised agency policy, procedure or practice to be implemented to correct the undesired condition.</p>	<p>To increase the hiring of qualified women within NRCS by expanding the women applicant pool for major occupations within NRCS.</p>	
<p>RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:</p>	<p>National FWP Manager Director, Diversity and Recruitment Branch (formerly, Talent Management) Deputy Chief for Management HR Director MD 715 Program Manager, CRD</p>	
<p>DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:</p>	<p>October 1, 2014</p>	
<p>TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:</p>	<p>September 30, 2016</p>	
<p>PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:</p>	<p>TARGET DATE</p>	

	(Must Be Specific)
Engaged FWP members, senior leaders, human resource staff, and hiring officials to examine ways to improve retention, and discuss process improvement to determine whether the recruitment and selection process should be refined internally.	Completed March 2015
Hosted mentoring and "brown bag" sessions with FWP employees to discuss their advancement experience.	Completed September 2015
Evaluate policies and practices and observe how qualified applicants are selected into senior grade level positions and assess whether the agency's selection process has any deficiencies or potential barriers.	September 2016
<p>Report of Accomplishments and Modifications of Objective</p> <p>The National Federal Women's Program Manager (NFWPM) is the lead responsible person for developing strategies and solutions that will promote management's commitment to equal opportunity in the work place. The NFWPM acts on a number of fronts, including targeted recruitment, addressing identified barriers, diversity best practices, career development, cultural awareness, and promoting workforce diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>In addition, the NFWPM has established productive relationships acquiring active support and engagement with community leaders from the women community as well as building professional contacts with the local employee organizations. The goal is to attract female interns to career paths in Federal service through various student programs, including the Federal Pathways and the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Programs.</p> <p>There are 110 women participating in Student Employment Programs: 89 Pathways, 13 1890s Program, 1 HACU, 2 SYEP, and 5 Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute. As of June, 30 2015, women make up 46% of all Student Employment Program hires (110 out of 240).</p> <p>Continued working with the Planning Committee to develop the first Annual Training Conference for women employees through the National Organization of Professional Women in NRCS. The conference took place August 6-8, 2015.</p> <p>Established a new support group, Working Parents Support Group. Have held two teleconferences this quarter with over 40 telephone lines involved.</p> <p>Distributed the brochure, "<i>Encouraging Girls Towards STEM Careers</i>," to the state FWPMs for distribution to all employees.</p>	

EEOC FORM 715-01 PART I	<i>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service</i> EEO PLAN TO ELIMINATE IDENTIFIED BARRIER	
Barrier Analysis #5: The low participate rate of PWTD when compared to the Federal benchmark of 4.0%.		
<p>STATEMENT of CONDITION THAT WAS A TRIGGER FOR A POTENTIAL BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a brief narrative describing the condition at issue.</p> <p>How was the condition recognized as a potential barrier?</p>	<p>The low participation rate of PWTD is 1.02%, which is below the community's benchmark of 4.0%.</p> <p>NRCS has a permanent workforce of 10,395 employees in FY 2015: 10.16% of employees in the permanent workforce identified themselves as having a disability and 1.02% identified as having a targeted disability (PWTD). The participation rate of PWTD in the permanent workforce increased by 0.06% from 0.96% to 1.02%, which remained below the community benchmark of 4.0%. Within the PWTD categories, NRCS employees identified the top three targeted disability groups as psychiatric disability (0.37%); partial paralysis (0.18%); and hearing disability (0.14%).</p>	
<p>BARRIER ANALYSIS:</p> <p>Provide a description of the steps taken and data analyzed to determine cause of the condition.</p>	<p>With respect to the senior grade levels, participation rates for PWTD were below the relevant benchmarks. Noticeably, the participation rate for PWTD at the SES level remains absent.</p> <p>Participation rates of PWTD are below the PWOTD's participation rates in the following major or mission-critical occupations: Soil Conservation – 0457 (0.74% v. PWOTD of 99.26%), Soil Conservation Technician-0458 (0.79% v. PWOTD of 99.21%), Soil Science-0470 (0.65% v. PWOTD of 99.35%) and General Biological Science-0401 (0.55% v. PWOTD of 99.45%).</p> <p>A summary of the Disability Employment Program accomplishments and efforts to eliminate the potential barriers for PWTD is provided in Part J and Appendix D of this report.</p>	
<p>STATEMENT OF IDENTIFIED BARRIER:</p> <p>Provide a succinct statement of the agency policy, procedure or practice that has been determined to be the barrier of the undesired condition.</p>	<p>The overall PWTD participation rate remains below the community's goal of 4%. A summary of the Disability Employment Program Manager's plans to eliminate the potential barriers for PWTD is provided at Appendix D.</p>	
<p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>State the alternative or revised agency policy, procedure or practice to be implemented to correct the undesired condition.</p>	<p>To increase the hiring of qualified PWTD within NRCS by expanding the applicant pool in filling major occupation positions within NRCS.</p>	
<p>RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:</p>	<p>National DEP Manager Director, Diversity and Recruitment Branch (formerly, Talent Management) Deputy Chief for Management HR Director MD 715 Program Manager, CRD</p>	
<p>DATE OBJECTIVE INITIATED:</p>	<p>October 1, 2014</p>	

TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	September 30, 2016	
PLANNED ACTIVITIES TOWARD COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVE:	TARGET DATE	
Provided updates to managers and supervisors regarding the disability hiring plan.	Completed June 2015	
Recognize managers and supervisors who have made outstanding contributions to ensure an inclusive work environment and supported hiring of individuals with targeted disabilities.	September 2016	
Ensured supervisors and managers' performance plans continue to include the accountability standards that hold them responsible for their practical roles and responsibilities in EEO, Diversity and Inclusion.	Completed September 2015	
Implement action items planned as shown on Part J of this report.	September December 2016	
Report of Accomplishments and Modifications of Objective		
<p>The National DEP Manager (NDEPM) works with hiring officials by meeting with human resource specialists and obtaining packets, including but not limited to, templates of sample vacancy announcements, resumes of veterans and individuals with disabilities, and job analyses. This model will decrease the time to hire applicants with disabilities and ensure a diverse applicant pool.</p> <p>The mission of the DEP is to responsible for developing strategies and solutions that will promote management's commitment to promoting hiring of persons with targeted disabilities in the work place. The NDEPM acts on a number of fronts, including targeted recruitment, addressing identified barriers, diversity best practices, career development, cultural awareness, and promoting workforce diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>As of June 30, 2015, there were no reported PWTD's among Student Employment Program hires.</p> <p>Current Mandates: President Obama's Executive Order 13548 – To increased Federal Employment of Individuals with Targeted Disabilities to <u>2%</u>; Secretary Vilsack's Goals Action Plan for FY14 – increased this number to <u>4%</u> on January 14, 2014.</p> <p>The overall person with targeted disability (PWTD) participation rate remains below the goal of 2%.</p>		
PLANNED ACTIVITIES and Accomplishments:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide updates to managers and supervisors regarding the disability hiring plan<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <u>Progress Report:</u> Report on NDEPM Accomplishments were provided to NRCS Chief Weller, and Deputy Chief for Management, Director of Talent Management, HR Director, and CR Director in June 2015.b. <u>Progress Report:</u> Also, on June 23, 2015, NSEPMs held a conference call with Chief Weller and Deputy Chief, Gayle Barry, to discuss the challenges and barriers of the Special Emphasis Programs.2. Recognize managers and supervisors who have made outstanding contributions to ensure an inclusive work environment and supported hiring of individuals with targeted disabilities.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <u>Progress Report:</u> Composed seven (7) letters of commendations and sent them to State Conservationist (STCs) and first-line supervisors outlining the <u>accomplishments</u> of their DEPM and thanking the STCs for their support.		

- b. Progress Report: Next month, will sent out five letters of commendations to selective STCs for their state role in successful recruitment and hiring of persons with targeted disabilities (PWTD).
- 3. Ensure supervisors and managers' performance plans continue to include the accountability standards that hold them responsible for their practical roles and responsibilities in EEO, Diversity and Inclusion.
 - a. Progress Report: On June 23rd, recommended changes to STCs annual performance plans to strengthen and hold accountable STCs for the recruitment and hiring of veterans and persons with disabilities. STCs' performance plans should contain quantitative and/or measurable goals for utilizing flexible hiring authorities (e.g., targeted disabilities, student employment such as the Student Career Experience Program, direct hire, appointing veterans, etc.).

MD-715 PART J

- 1. Total number of applications received from persons with targeted disabilities during the reporting period: N/A
- 2. Total number of selections of individuals (new hires) with targeted disabilities during this reporting period: 5

Making progress with recruitment and hiring rate of PWTD; started FY-2015 at 0.97%; estimate that we will be at 1.5% by end of FY-15;

Accomplishments:

During the fourth quarter, the National DEPM role held for three years went from being a 20% collateral duty to a full time position and is now being held by Brianne Burger.

Conducted Special Emphasis Program Manager's training to NRCS' State SEPMs at the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees annual leadership and training conference in Grapevine, Texas.

Held the 4th quarter teleconference with the State level DEPMs

NRCS Alabama hired one new targeted disability employee making this the 8th new hire with targeted disabilities this year.

See Appendix D for details on the DEP accomplishments, initiatives and updates.

PART J Department or Agency Identifying Information	<div>Part J</div> <div>U.S Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service</div> <div>Special Program Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, and Advancement of Individuals with Disabilities</div> <div>for Period Covering October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015</div>						
Part II Employment Trend and Special Recruitment for Individuals with Targeted Disabilities	Enter Actual Number at the beginning of FY 2015		... end of FY 2015		Net Change	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	Rate of Change
	Total Workforce	10,705	100%	10,596	100%	-109	-1.02%
	Reportable Disability	1,070	10.00%	1076	10.00%	+6	+0.56%
	Targeted Disability	104	0.97%	109	0.97%	+5	+4.80%
	The Federal Goal by 2015		2.0%		%		
	If the rate of change for persons with targeted disabilities is not equal to or greater than the rate of change for the total workforce, a barrier analysis should be conducted (see below). 1. Total number of applications received from persons with targeted disabilities during the reporting period (that voluntarily self-identified). 2. Total number of selections of individuals with targeted disabilities during this reporting period.						

PART III Participation Rates In Agency Employment Programs – Permanent Workforce									
Other Employment/Personnel Programs	TOTAL	Reportable Disability		Targeted Disability		Not Identified		No Disability	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
3. Competitive Promotions	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4. Non-Competitive Promotions	1195	116	9.71%	13	1.09%	37	3.17%	1042	87.20%
5. Employment Development Training	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6. Employee Recognition and Awards									
• Time-Off Awards/Total hours awarded	551 (5801 hrs.)	47 (481 hrs)	8.55%	5 (74 hrs)	1.00%	6 (48 hrs)	8.7%	498 (5371 hrs)	90.4%
• Cash Awards Under \$500	1268 (\$459,059)	135	10.64 %	7	0.55%	27	2.13%	1106	87.22%
• Cash Awards Over \$500	5,007 (\$5,485,916)	456	9.12%	37	.74%	64	1.30%	4487	89.62%
• Quality Step Increases (QSIs) (Total \$awarded)	267 \$500,482	23	8.6%	2	0.75%	3	1.12%	241	90.26%

Part IV. Identification and Elimination of Barriers

NRCS aggressively targeted diverse groups of qualified candidates, including persons with targeted disabilities, in its FY 2014 recruiting campaign.

The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities database is provided to all Disability Emphasis Program Managers (DEPMs) and the link is identified on the NRCS CRD Web site. In March, the 2010 Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP) data was available on the website (www.wrp.gov). It provides information on over 1,800 college students with disabilities who are seeking summer or permanent employment in federal agencies nationwide. In order to access the database you must request your ID/PW through the above-noted Web site. Because of the confidential information within the database access is restricted to DEPMs/VEPMs, HRM and hiring officials. NRCS Disabilities Emphasis Program Managers (DEPM) work continuously to break down barriers in hiring and retaining persons with disabilities. These efforts include:

NRCS continues to recognize that employees hired 20-30 years ago could have become employees with disabilities. Employees are encouraged to review SF-256 and update on line. This enabled the agency to recertify employees and obtain a more accurate count of employees with disabilities.

For many years, NRCS has had a proactive reasonable accommodation program which has been fully developed to track the progress of requests for reasonable accommodations. See Appendix C. The DEPM facilitated the provision of services to employees via the development of very effective working relationships with internal and external resources. The Department has a highly capable assistive technology unit that provides technology assessments, assistive technology hardware and software, alternate format products, and adaptive technology.

Listed below are highlights of NDEPM plan of actions to eliminate the identified barriers:

- Across the U.S., NRCS NDEPMs forward and carry job vacancies to local hiring authorities, job fairs, vocational organizations and agencies that support the employment of persons with disabilities to ensure those job opportunities are seen by as wide a population as possible.
- Organizing and participating in "Diversity Days" where triggers, barriers, and success stories regarding persons with disabilities are discussed and presented to supervisors and workers.
- Coordinating with leadership to reserve some student positions for students with disabilities, and then finding those students and hiring them.
- A comprehensive sharing within NRCS employees nationwide regarding the Presidential Proclamation promoting hiring persons with disabilities, and wide participation in the White House Disability teleconferences.
- Spreading awareness through the NRCS National Disabilities poster contest, highlighting the benefits and profitability of hiring persons with disabilities.
- Participating in all State DEPMs in Civil Rights Action Committees to ensure persons with disabilities remain high up in consideration in Civil Rights programs.
- Quarterly DEPM teleconferences are organized to share USDA guidance, provide training, and to assess the State DEPM's concerns and questions regarding issues affecting the hiring and retention of persons with disabilities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination has been made with other Federal agencies including the Federal Disabilities Workforce Consortium, to share information and coordinate efforts of DEPMs. • Hosting quarterly teleconferences with other National SEPMS to provide centralized information, guidance, training and direction to the State and Center SEPMS. Through these teleconferences SEPMS share ideas, concerns and best practices. <p>For more information on the DEP accomplishments, analysis and updates, see Appendix D of this report.</p>
Part V Goals for PWTD	<p>In FY 2016, NRCS will continue to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fully engage agency senior officials, the HR Group, Hiring Officials, and DEP members to explore strategies that can promote hiring of PWTD; 2. Review exit survey results to determine the causes for PWTD separation rates; 3. Work to participate in Individuals with Disabilities and Veterans Career Fairs; 4. Improve the coordination between the DEPM and the Selective Placement Coordinators; 5. Develop a NRCS Action/Hiring Plan for PWTD; 6. Ensure that training and workshops are provided to managers and supervisors on the use of special hiring authorities for qualified individuals with disabilities, reasonable accommodations, ADR and prevention of harassment. 7. Disseminate job announcements for targeted job series to the EEO community and other diverse constituent groups. 8. Promote outreach activities by working closely with State DEPMs, HR Veterans Employment Program (VEP) and selective placement coordinators. 9. Strengthen partnerships with State DEPMs to address the effectiveness of recruitment, career development and retention initiatives for the PWTD.